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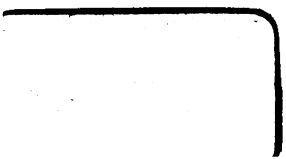
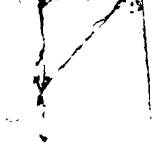
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THE
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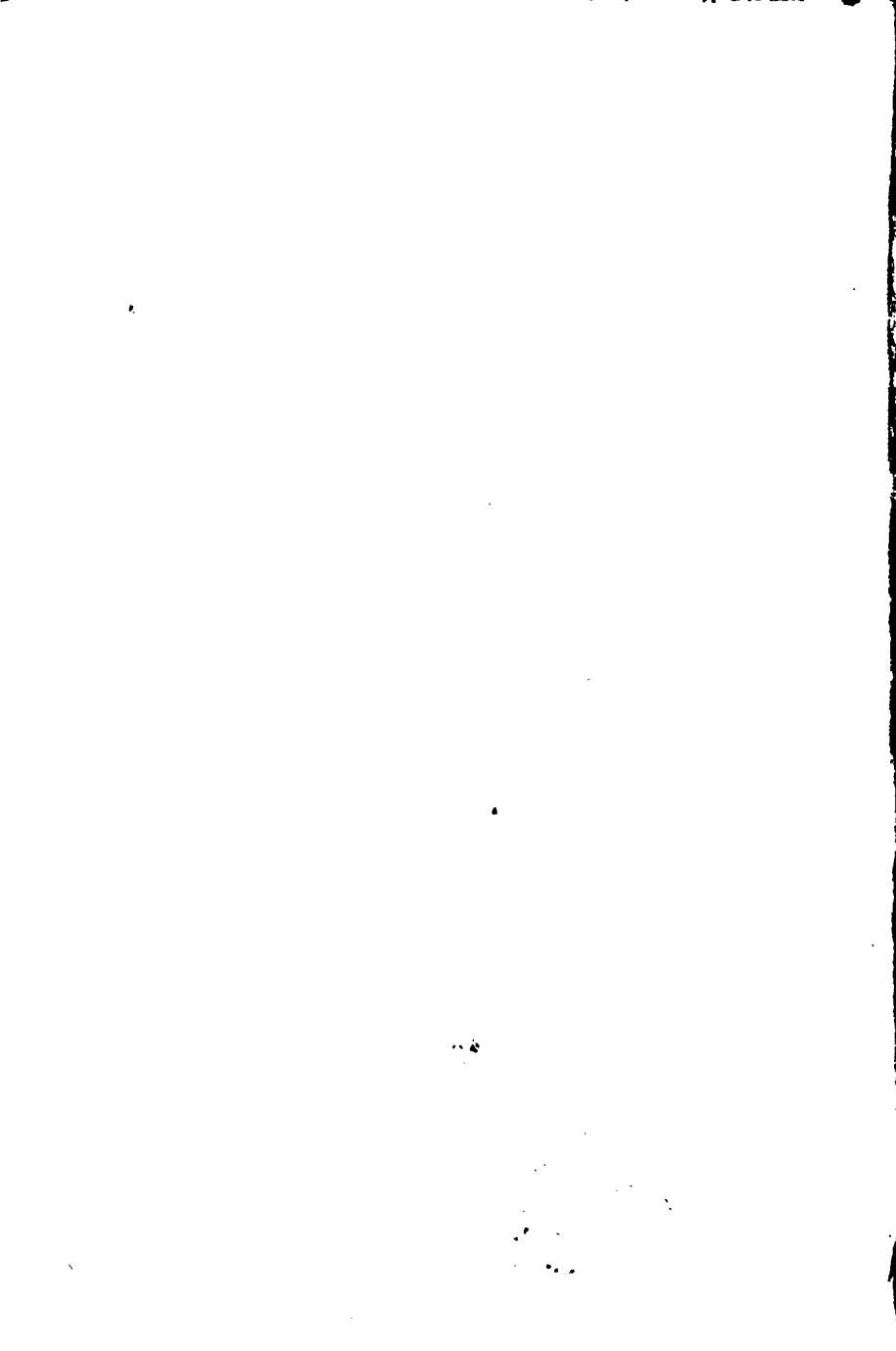
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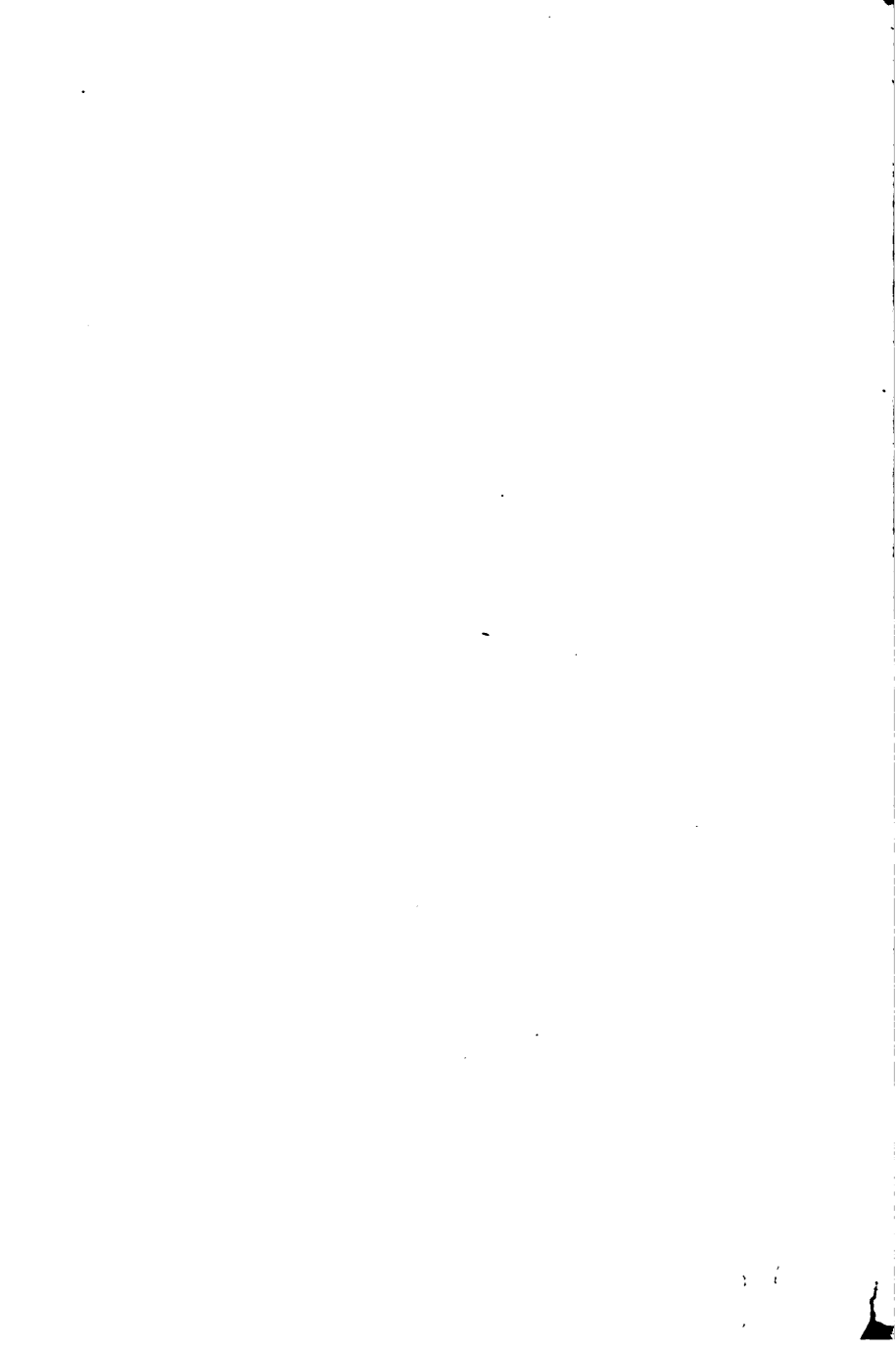


Dumas

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THE NEAPOLITAN LOVERS



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THE NEAPOLITAN LOVERS

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Translated and with an Introduction
by
R. S. GARNETT

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

BRITISH subjects all the world over, being familiar with the life of Nelson, will remember that having won the battle of the Nile and so blocked up Bonaparte and his army in Egypt, he returned to Naples in the poor wretched *Vanguard*, as he described his vessel, sighting the city on 22nd September, 1798.

Dumas opens the present romance on the following day when Ferdinand IV., King of the Two Sicilies, and his Queen Maria Carolina, sister of Marie Antoinette; Caracciolo, accompanied by the British Minister, Sir William Hamilton with his celebrated wife who were also in the royal galley, came out into the bay of Naples to meet the saviour of Italy, as the Queen called our greatest Admiral.

Three months later, almost day for day, after that brilliant and joyous reception on the water, Nelson, on a wild, stormy night, secretly and stealthily embarked King Ferdinand, his family and courtiers in three barges, and having thus transported them on board the *Vanguard*, conveyed them from Naples to Palermo.

What had occurred during these three months? Why this royal flight in the dead of night under the protection of Nelson? Dumas is going to explain it all down to the most minute detail in his inimitable manner, and we need only mention that King Ferdinand was so anxious to obliterate every record of that epoch that he issued a decree ordering every proclamation, every edict, manifesto, deed and writing to be given up by

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his Neapolitan subjects to his police within eight days. For what purpose? Simply for burning by the public hangman. The hangman was, however, to preserve one complete set for the use and as the property of His Majesty. This decree was dated 18th January, 1800.

Dumas had long awaited an opportunity of dealing with the Neapolitan Claudius and the Venetian Messalina (King Ferdinand and Queen Maria Carolina). He might have said in the words of *Hernani* when he was at war with Charles V. :

La meurtre est entre nous affaire de famille.

In 1851 Dumas wrote :—*

“ Perhaps some day my filial vengeance will evoke these two blood-stained spectres and force them to pose in naked hideousness before posterity ; perhaps some day the assassins of Caracciolo and the mistress of Acton will account to me for the father’s love that they snatched from me when I was scarcely old enough to know what it was to have a father.”

The opportunity, then, was long in coming, but when it arrived it did so in the most dramatic manner possible.

In May, 1860, Dumas had hardly finished writing his “ *Memoirs of Garibaldi* ” from material handed him by his friend, when, bound for a tour in the East, he learnt on arriving at Genoa that Garibaldi had just left that port for Sicily. Dumas read some letters left for him by Garibaldi with Vecchi, the historian, and realising the vast results which would follow the success of such an enterprise as the conquest of Sicily, set sail again on his yacht the *Emma* for Palermo, which he reached just as the Dictator had taken it after a three days’ siege. The remainder of the campaign was witnessed by Dumas who accompanied Garibaldi, and has recorded those marvellous days in his “ *Garibaldians in Sicily*,”

* See “ *The Last King or the New France*,” by Alexandre Dumas, edited by R. S. Garnett, Vol. I., p. 188 (Stanley Paul & Co., 1915)

being the letters which, as a Special Correspondent, he tore from his note book and despatched to Paris.

The conquest of Sicily accomplished, Dumas, with the hearty assent of Garibaldi went to Marseilles to buy arms and ammunition for the "Thousand Heroes," and having seen them despatched, sailed for Naples, where, much to the annoyance of the authorities, he anchored the *Emma* in the bay.

The joy of our author may be imagined when Garibaldi, having crossed the strait and entered Naples, the while King Francis fled, installed him, the poet and romancer, in the Chiatamone Palace, giving him permission to examine the secret Archives of the City. There he found the unique set of the public documents, manuscripts and letters which the public hangman had reserved for the delectation of King Ferdinand, his father's murderer.

Had Garibaldi's entry into Naples achieved no other result than making Dumas happy, his many admirers would, doubtless, have deemed it worth accomplishing, but it did more than that, for it enabled our author to write the present story. With what delight must he have examined that royal set of papers, filled as they were with proofs of the baseness, cruelty and folly of the King and Queen. As he read, he saw them with Nelson, Sir William and Lady Hamilton, Caracciolo, Cardinal Ruffo, the unspeakable General Mack, the French Republican General Championnet, the Conspirators Hector Caraffa, Cirillo, Palmieri, Manthonnet, the monk Fra Pacifico, the bandit Fra Diavolo, and a host besides. Then his imagination taking fire, he seized a pen and sketched out his plan, including many characters which his long acquaintance with Italy and the Italians enabled him to invent at will. Soon his Neapolitan newspaper "The Independent," which Garibaldi suggested he should establish and edit, heralded the publication in its columns of the new romance in the Italian language, while the Parisian journal "*La Presse*," to which a copy of the original manuscript was to be despatched, informed its readers

of the good fortune in store for them.* In due course, the story took its place in the "Oeuvres Complètes," where it fills four volumes.

Such is the history of the present book, which, although much read on the continent, appears to be almost unknown in this country.

It may be admitted that the best way to write a romance, a historical romance especially, is not to select the murderers of one's own father as principal characters—and indeed but few of us could do so—and did not history, as it undoubtedly does, support Dumas in his main facts and conclusions respecting King Ferdinand and his Queen, the reader might be excused for supposing that the author's ardent imagination had misled him. A book which nearly every one possesses, Southey's "Life of Nelson," will convince any one who refers to it in the matter. Those who have time and opportunity may profitably read a more detailed study made with documents at the author's hand which were unknown to Southey—"La Reine Marie—Caroline de Naples,"—by A. Gagnière.† They will then, we consider, be able to say that Dumas, although writing from the standpoint and with the predispositions of a Frenchman, took his vengeance in a legitimate and creditable manner, when he composed this historical romance.

R. S. GARNETT.

* For the satisfaction of the curious, let us add that Dumas wrote this romance at the Palace Chiatamone without a collaborator. According to his custom, he used large sheets of blue paper and blue ink. Some fifty letters went to a line, forty lines to a page, and one hundred and seventy-five pages to a volume. The original manuscript, which was copied by his Secretary Goujon, he presented to an Italian prince. On receipt of each volume Rouy, the manager of the *Presse*, duly remitted 4,000 francs to Dumas, and Emile de Girardin, the proprietor, rubbed his hands and chuckled as he saw his "circulation" daily rising and the *Presse* snatched from hand to hand. The fortunes which Dumas made for other people are incalculable. This translation being intended for English readers, Dumas' lengthy biographical sketches of Nelson and Lady Hamilton, and some other matters of no importance to the story, have been omitted.

† Ollendorf, Paris, 1886.

THE NEAPOLITAN LOVERS

CHAPTER I

THE HERO OF THE NILE

ON September 22nd, 1798, the magnificent Bay of Naples, always smiling, incessantly furrowed by thousands of boats, always echoing the sound of music and the songs of mariners, was even more joyous, more noisy, and more animated than ever.

September at Naples is glorious, for neither the excessive heat of summer nor the capricious rains of autumn are then known, and this day on which our story opens was one of the most splendid of the month. A flood of golden sunlight bathed the vast amphitheatre of heights which extends one arm to Nisida and the other to Portici, enclosing the favoured town on the slopes of Mount St. Elmo, above which stands the ancient Angevin citadel—a mural crown adorning the brow of the modern Parthenope. The vast expanse of the Bay, resembling an azure carpet strewn with golden spangles, was slightly stirred by the morning breeze, perfumed and balmy, so gentle as to bring a smile to every face it touched and yet keen enough to rouse in the breasts it stirred that yearning towards the Infinite which inspires Man with the proud thought that he also is,

or may become, Divine, and that this world is merely the shelter of a day, a brief resting-place in the life eternal.

Eight o'clock resounded from the church of San Ferdinando and the last vibration had hardly died away when all the thousand bells of the three hundred churches of Naples clanged a joyous peal from their various belfries, while the guns of the forts Del Ovo, Castel Nuovo and Del Carmine thundered forth as if attempting to out-do them and surrounded the town with a girdle of smoke. Above this, St. Elmo, flaming amidst clouds like a volcano in eruption, seemed a new Vesuvius confronting the old.

Both guns and bells were saluting a magnificent galley which at this moment left the quay, crossed the military harbour and, propelled by both sails and oars, glided majestically towards the open sea. She was followed by ten or twelve smaller but scarcely less magnificent craft and might well claim to rival the Bucentaur bearing the Doge to his nuptials with the Adriatic.

On her quarter-deck stood an officer wearing the rich uniform of a Neapolitan Admiral and apparently about forty-six years of age. He was Francis Caracciolo, a scion of an ancient family accustomed to provide ambassadors for kings and lovers for queens, and he stood on his quarter-deck precisely as if he were taking his ship into action.

The whole of the deck was covered with a purple awning, emblazoned with the royal arms, intended to shelter the august passengers from the rays of the sun. They were disposed in groups differing widely in appearance and attitude.

The most considerable of these groups consisted of five men occupying the centre of the ship. Three stood outside the awning on the deck and two carried a golden key suspended from a coat button, indicative of the wearer's rank as chamberlain. All wore ribbons of various colours sustaining orders of every country, and their breasts were bedizened with stars and crossed with

ribbons. The central figure was a man of about forty-seven, tall and slight, but well built. He stooped slightly in consequence of a habit of leaning forward to listen to those who conversed with him. But not the splendid coat richly embroidered with gold, nor the diamond stars of different orders which he wore, nor even the "Majesty," incessantly on the lips of his attendants, could obviate the vulgarity of his appearance. He had clumsy, large hands, thick ankles and wrists, a low forehead and a retreating chin which accentuated an enormously thick and long nose. The eyes alone were lively and mischievous, but nearly always furtive, and sometimes cruel. This was Ferdinand IV., King by the Grace of God of the Two Sicilies and Jerusalem, an Infante of Spain, Duke of Parma, of Piacenza, of Castro and hereditary Grand Prince of Tuscany, but whom the lazzaroni of Naples qualified quite simply as "Il Re Nasone" ("King of the big nose").

The person most frequently addressed by the monarch and who, though wearing the embroidered coat of diplomacy, wore the most simple dress of the party, was Sir William Hamilton, foster-brother of George III., who for five-and-thirty years had represented Great Britain at the Sicilian Court. The remaining three were the Marquis Malespina, aide-de-camp to the King, John Acton, Irish by birth and Prime Minister, and the Duke d'Ascoli, Ferdinand's friend and chamberlain.

Another group consisted of two women only, who might have formed a fitting subject for the brush of Angelica Kauffman, and whose appearance could not have failed to arouse interest and attention in even the most indifferent observer, however ignorant of their names and rank. The elder of the two ladies, although past her brilliant youth, still shewed traces of remarkable beauty. Daughter of Maria-Theresa, sister to Marie-Antoinette, as could be guessed from her features, she was Maria-Carolina, Queen of the Two Sicilies, and wife of Ferdinand IV., whom for various reasons, she had first treated with indifference, which later became

dislike and had now developed into contempt. Only political considerations brought the two together, otherwise they lived entirely apart, the King hunting in the royal forests or reposing in his harem at St. Leucio, while the Queen transacted business of state at Naples, Caserta or Portici, with her minister Acton, or rested in orange groves with her favourite Lady Hamilton, who at this moment was sitting at her feet in the attitude of a captive queen.

A single glance bestowed on the latter sufficed to explain not merely the favour with which the Queen regarded her, but also the frenzy of enthusiasm which she excited among the English artists, who depicted her in every possible attitude, and the Neapolitan poets, who sang of her in every metre. If human nature can arrive at the perfection of beauty, then certainly Emma Hamilton had attained this goal, and must have inherited some of that wonderful potion given by Venus to Phaon which endowed its possessor with an irresistible power of attraction.

This assembly of kings, princes and courtiers, sheltered by their purple awning, glided over an azure sea to the melodious sound of music presided over by Domenico Cimarosa, the royal choir master and composer. The magnificent ship passed successively Resina, Portici and Torre-del-Greco, driven by that soft wind of Baïa which causes the roses of Pæstum to bloom twice in a year.

Far beyond Capri and Cape Campanella a man-of-war became visible on the horizon. Observing the royal fleet, she immediately altered her course and headed towards it. A slight puff of smoke appeared from a port-hole and the crimson flag of England unfurled gracefully from the mast, while a prolonged detonation like the roll of distant thunder resounded over the tranquil sea.

When the two ships were within a cable's length of each other, the royal musicians struck up "God save the King," to which the sailors of the other ship, the famous *Vanguard*, who were manning the yards, replied

with the three traditional English cheers, due to each official compliment.

The officer in command of the *Vanguard* was Horatio Nelson. He had just destroyed the French fleet at Aboukir; by so doing depriving Bonaparte and the republican army of all hope of returning to France. He ordered his ship to lay to so as to allow the royal galley to come alongside, and the accommodation ladder, reserved for guests and officers, to be lowered. Standing hat in hand at the top he awaited his visitors, while all the crew, even those still suffering from wounds, were drawn up three deep on deck ready to present arms. He expected, according to all etiquette, to see first the King, then the Queen, then the Prince Royal and others according to rank; but by a clever feminine piece of strategy, the Queen (Nelson himself mentions this in a letter to his wife) pushed Lady Hamilton to the front. Blushing at being thus forced to take precedence, Emma mounted the steps, and, was it real emotion, or only skilful acting? on seeing Nelson with bandaged head, pale with loss of blood, she turned pale herself, and exclaiming "O dear, dear Nelson!" sank fainting on his breast. Nelson dropped his hat with a cry of joy, and supporting her with his one arm, pressed her to his heart, for one instant forgetting the whole world in a momentary trance of ineffable delight. When he recovered his senses, the King, Queen, and all the Court were already on deck, and all emotion must be suppressed.

The King took Nelson's hand, and addressing him as the "Liberator of Europe" offered him the magnificent sword of Louis XIV., on the pommel of which were hung the letters patent of the Dukedom of Brontö, and the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of St. Ferdinand. To this succeeded the Queen, who called him her friend, the "Protector of Thrones," the "Avenger of Kings," and taking his hand and that of Emma Hamilton in both her own, pressed them together.

The King himself girded on the historic sword, the

Queen presented the title of Duke of Brontë, and Lady Hamilton hung the ribbon sustaining the Cross of St. Ferdinand round the hero's neck.

Then came all the rest, Prince and Princess Royal, Ministers, Courtiers, but what were their praises compared to those of the King and Queen, or to one touch of the hand of Emma Hamilton?

It was agreed that Nelson should go on board the royal galley, but first of all, Emma, by desire of the Queen, requested to be shewn all the details of the *Vanguard*, which, like her commander, still shewed glorious and unhealed wounds. Nelson, with Lady Hamilton leaning on his arm, did the honours of his ship with all the pride of a sailor.

It was now two o'clock and the return to Naples would take three hours. Nelson desired his flag-captain to take command, and to the sound of music and of ordnance, descended into the royal galley, which, light as a sea-gull, shook herself free of the man-of-war, and glided gracefully over the waves on her return voyage.

It was now the turn of the Italian Admiral to do the honours of his ship. Nelson and Caracciolo had both fought at the siege of Toulon, where the courage and skill of the latter had been rewarded by the rank of Admiral, thus making him equal to Nelson over whom he had already the advantage of being heir to a name illustrious during three centuries. Possibly this last detail explains the cold greeting exchanged between the Admirals and the evident haste with which Caracciolo returned to his post on the quarter-deck.

Meanwhile Sir William Hamilton had been explaining to the King how the island of Capri had been bought from the Neapolitans by Augustus, who had observed that the branches of a decayed old oak, at the moment of his landing in the island had recovered themselves and put forth fresh leaves. The King listened attentively, and then remarked :

“ My dear Ambassador, the quails began their migration three days ago. In a week's time we will have a grand shoot at Capri, there will be thousands of them.”

The Ambassador, who owed his favour with the King to the fact that he was himself an excellent shot, bowed his acknowledgment.

The Commandants at Naples had kept their glasses fixed on the royal galley and when she was seen to tack and make for Naples, judging that Nelson must be on board, they ordered a salute of a hundred and one guns, such as announces the birth of an heir to the crown. The royal carriages and those belonging to the Embassy were in waiting, it having been agreed that for this day the Palace would cede its rights to the Embassy, that Nelson should be the guest of the Hamiltons, who would give the dinner and the fête which was to follow it, in which the town of Naples would join with illuminations and fireworks.

When close upon the harbour, Lady Hamilton approached Caracciolo and, addressing him with her gentlest voice and most seductive manner :

“The entertainment we are giving to our illustrious countryman will be incomplete,” she said, “if the only sailor who can compare with him does not help us in doing honour to his victory by proposing a toast to the greatness of England, the happiness of the Two Sicilies and the humiliation of the proud French Republic which dares to make war upon kings. We hope that Admiral Caracciolo, the hero of Toulon, will undertake this.”

Caracciolo, one of the handsomest and most dignified men of his time, bowed courteously.

“Milady,” he replied with gravity, “I deeply regret my inability to perform the glorious task you would entrust to me, but the night threatens to be as stormy as the day has been beautiful.”

Lady Hamilton smiled and glanced at the horizon. Except for a few light clouds rising near Procida the blue of the sky was as clear as that of her eyes.

“You do not believe me, Milady,” said Caracciolo, “but a man who has spent two-thirds of his life on this capricious Mediterranean can read the message of the atmosphere. Those light clouds which you see

rising over there and approaching us show that the wind is veering from N.W. to West. By ten o'clock this evening it will be blowing from the South which means a "scirocco," and the port of Naples being open to every wind that blows, and this one in particular, it becomes my duty to see that the ships of His Britannic Majesty, already damaged in battle, at least get a safe anchorage. What we have done to-day, Milady, is simply a perfectly plain declaration of war with France. Now the French are at Rome, five days' march from here. Believe me, in a very few days it will be well to have both fleets in fighting condition."

Lady Hamilton frowned.

"Prince," she said, "I accept your excuse, which shews so much anxiety for the joint interests of their Majesties of England and Naples. But we hope at least to see your charming niece Cecilia, who cannot plead ignorance, having received her invitation the very day on which we heard from Lord Nelson."

"Alas! Milady, but there is another unhappy circumstance which I have to tell you. My sister-in-law, Cecilia's mother, has been so ill the last few days that it is impossible for her daughter to leave her, and I received a letter from the poor girl this morning expressing her deep regret at being unable to attend your fête and begging me to present her excuses to your ladyship, which I have the honour to do at this moment."

During this short conversation the Queen had approached, listened, heard, and understood. She frowned, her lower lip lengthened, and her cheek lost its colour.

"Beware, Prince!" she said in angry tones, and with a smile as threatening as the light clouds which announced the coming tempest, "no one except those present at Lady Hamilton's entertainment will be invited to the Court festivals."

"Alas! Madame," replied Caracciolo with perfect serenity, "but my poor sister-in-law is so seriously ill that she could not be present at these fêtes if they lasted a whole month, nor consequently can her daughter

attend them, since a young girl of her age and position cannot, even at the Palace, appear in society without her mother."

"Very well, sir," replied the Queen, unable to control her anger, "believe me, this refusal will not be forgotten."

Taking Lady Hamilton's arm, "Come, dear Emma," she said; adding in a lower voice:

"Oh! these Neapolitans! How they hate me! I know it well. But I am not behindhand, I execrate them!"

And she hastened towards the staircase, but Caracciolo preceded her, giving a sign at which the music again burst joyously forth, the cannon thundered, and all the bells pealed together. The Queen with rage in her heart, and Emma with the blush of shame on her brow, descended the steps amidst all outward signs of triumphant joy.

The King, Queen, Lady Hamilton and Nelson entered the first carriage, the Prince and Princess Royal, Sir William and Acton took their places in the second, the rest followed.

They drove straight to the church of Santa Chiara, where a solemn Te Deum was performed.

Then the assembly returned to their carriages and proceeded to the English Embassy, which occupied one of the largest and most beautiful palaces in Naples. The streets were so crowded that the progress was slow, and Nelson, unaccustomed to the noisy demonstrations of a southern race, was intoxicated by the cries of "Long live Nelson," shouted by thousands of voices, and dazzled by the multitudes of coloured handkerchiefs waved by as many arms.

But what more astonished him was the audacity of the lazzaroni, who climbed on the steps and on the box and back of the Royal carriage without the coachman, footman, or runners taking the smallest notice of them. They pulled the Royal queue and even tweaked the Royal nose, addressing the king as "Gossip Nasone!" asking when he would sell his fish at Mergellina, or

eat accaroni at St. Charles. It was something widely different from the respectful homage shewn to the English kings, but Ferdinand seemed so happy, and replied so gaily to the jokes and rough speeches with which he was favoured, and bestowed such vigorous thumps on those who pulled his queue too rudely, that Nelson concluded it signified the excesses of spoilt children with a too indulgent father rather than any intentional rudeness or impertinence.

The entrance to the Embassy had been transformed into an immense triumphal arch crowned by the new Coat of Arms which the King of England had just conferred on Nelson along with the title of Baron Nelson of the Nile. At each side stood a gilt Venetian mast with a long, crimson pennon floating from the top bearing the legend, "Horatio Nelson," in letters of gold. And the staircase was an archway of laurels starred with bouquets of the costliest flowers forming the monogram H. N. These initials were seen everywhere, they adorned the livery buttons of the servants, the china dinner service, even the table napkins, and the immense palace appeared full of floating perfumes and invisible melody like the enchanted garden of Armida.

On the announcement, "Their Majesties are served," the dinner began, Nelson being placed facing the King between the Queen and Lady Hamilton.

The light of thousands of tapers was reflected in the mirrors, and shone from the candelabra upon gold and silver embroideries, bringing sparks of many colours from jewels, diamond crosses and stars, and seeming to invest the illustrious guests with the sort of aureole which, in the eyes of an enslaved nation, sets apart kings, queens and princes as a race of demi-gods, or at least of superior and privileged beings.

A toast was given at each course, the King setting the example by proposing the "Glorious Reign, the cloudless prosperity, and the long life of his beloved cousin and august ally, George III., King of England." In defiance of etiquette, the Queen herself proposed the health of Lord Nelson, the "Liberator of Italy," to

whom Emma Hamilton passed the glass which she had touched with her lips; and each toast was received with cheers and applause which seemed to rend the roof. The enthusiasm increased until the dessert was arrived at, when an unexpected circumstance heightened it into delirium.

The guests were only awaiting the King's signal for rising. He rose and all followed his example, but he remained standing in his place, while the most splendid voices of the St. Charles' theatre, accompanied by the whole orchestra, sang the solemn anthem of "God Save the King." Each verse was furiously applauded, especially the last, when unexpectedly a voice, clear, pure and sonorous rose above the din and sang solo another verse, added expressly for the occasion :

" Joignons-nous, pour fêter la gloire
 Du favori de la Victoire
 Du Français l'effroi !
 Des Pharaons l'antique terre
 Chante avec la noble Angleterre,
 De Nelson orgueilleuse mère :
 ' Dieu Sauve la Roi ! "

These lines were received with thunders of applause, until suddenly the words died on the lips of the guests who turned terrified eyes towards the door as if the spectre of Banquo or the statue of the Commander had suddenly appeared on the threshold.

A man of great height and threatening aspect, stood framed in the doorway, in the centre of a blaze of light which shewed every detail of that severe and magnificent costume worn in the early days of the French Republic, the blue coat, red waistcoat embroidered with gold, the tight white pantaloons and highboots. His left hand rested on the hilt of his sword, his right was held inside his coat, and, unpardonable insolence ! his head was covered with the three-cornered hat, on which rested the tricolour plume, the emblem of a Revolution which raised the nation to the height of a throne and brought kings to the scaffold. He was Garat, the Ambassador

of France, the man who had read the sentence of death to Louis XVI. in the Temple. The effect produced by such an apparition at such a moment may be imagined.

A death-like silence, which no one dared to break, prevailed in the hall, until with a firm and clear voice the Ambassador spoke :

“ Notwithstanding my experience of the ceaseless treachery of this lying Court of the Two Sicilies, I still doubted ; I wished to see with my own eyes, to hear with my own ears. I have seen and I have heard. More plain-speaking than that Roman, who, in a fold of his toga offered Peace or War to the Senate of Carthage, I bring you only War, for you have to-day denied and rejected Peace. Therefore, King Ferdinand, Queen Caroline have the war you desire, but I warn you that it will be a war of extermination in which, in spite of the hero of this feast, in spite of the impious Power which he represents, you will lose both throne and life. I leave this perjured town ; close your gates behind me ; let your forts bristle with cannon and assemble your fleets in your ports. The vengeance of France may be slow but you will not make it less inevitable or less terrible, for everything will fall before this war-cry of the Great Nation, ‘ Long live the Republic ! ’ ”

Leaving the modern Belshazzar and his terrified guests shrinking from the three words which echoed through the hall, and which each thought must be traced in flame on the walls, the herald, who, like him of old, had thrown the flaming and bloody javelin, symbol of War, on the hostile soil, slowly withdrew, the scabbard of his sword resounding on the steps of the marble staircase.

Hardly had these sounds died away, when they were succeeded by those caused by the wheels of a post-chaise departing as fast as four vigorous horses could take it.

CHAPTER II

THE ENVOY FROM ROME

A SMALL door in a dwelling situate in the most lonely part of the ascent to Pausilippo, was opened from the inside, and a man emerged. He followed a narrow path which turned downwards, descending rapidly towards the sea, and leading straight to the "Palace of Queen Joanna," a curious ruin which covered the top of a rock incessantly washed by the waves, which at high-tide penetrated the lower rooms of an unfinished building which had arrived at decrepitude without having ever enjoyed life. The Neapolitans, wholly regardless of the fact that its architecture plainly proved that it dated only from the seventeenth century, persisted in attributing it to Queen Joanna of evil memory, but it had, in fact, been built by the Duke of Medina, a favourite of Olivarez, who on his master's downfall had been obliged to return to Spain, leaving this unfinished palace to become, so it was said, the hiding-place of evil-doers, and the haunt of evil spirits.

The pathway ended abruptly on the edge of a rock overhanging an abyss some twelve feet in depth. At present, however, the path was continued by a narrow plank, the other end of which rested on a window sill on the first floor of the palace, forming a bridge something like the one to be crossed in order to arrive at the Mohammedan Paradise.

The man in the mantle nevertheless walked straight over it with a carelessness which indicated full acquaint-

ance with his road, but the instant he arrived at the window another man appeared inside presenting a pistol at his breast. This was evidently the usual precaution, for the newcomer did not trouble himself in the least, but made a slight masonic sign and murmured the half of a word which the other finished, standing aside as he did so, in order to allow his visitor to descend into the room. Arrived there, the latter wished to relieve the sentry in his post, in order to await the next arrival as was apparently the custom, just as in the Royal mausoleum at St. Denis, the late King of France awaits the coming of his successor at the top of the staircase.

"No need," replied the other, "we are all here except Velasco, who cannot come before midnight." Thereupon both applied themselves to pulling over the plank which had served as a drawbridge, and placing it against the wall. Having thus guarded against intruders they disappeared in the darkness, more dense within the ruins than without.

But, however great the gloom, it presented no difficulty to the two friends, who plunged without hesitation into a sort of corridor which here and there admitted a little light through the cracks in the ceiling. It led them to a staircase, deprived of all handrail, but sufficiently wide to be used without danger, and which ended in a hall overlooking the sea in one of the empty window spaces of which a human form could be discerned from within, though invisible from without. It turned round at the sound of their footsteps.

"Are we all here?" enquired the shadowy form.

"Yes, all," replied two voices at once.

"Then," said the shadow, "there only remains the envoy from Rome to wait for."

"And," replied the man with the mantle, "if he is much later I doubt whether he can come at all—to-night at any rate." And he glanced out at the waves, already white with foam under the first breath of the coming scirocco.

"True, the sea is angry," replied the shadow, "but,

if he be indeed the sort of man promised us by Hector, he will not be stopped by a small thing like that."

"A small thing, Gabriel! Do you know of what you are talking? The South wind is rising, in another hour the sea will be impassable. I am not the nephew of Admiral Caracciolo for nothing."

"If he cannot come by sea he will come by land, if he cannot come in a boat he will swim, if he cannot swim he will take a balloon," said a youthful and fresh voice. "I know my man, I have seen him at work. If he has said to General Championnet, 'I will go,' go he will, if it has to be through all hell fire."

"Any how, we are not losing time," said he of the mantle, striking his repeater, "the rendezvous is between eleven and midnight, and as you hear, it is not yet eleven."

"Very well," said the admiral's nephew, "as I am the youngest, it is my business to keep guard here and yours, being older and wiser, to go and deliberate. Go down then to the council chamber, I will remain here, and when I see a boat with a light at its prow I will let you know."

"There is nothing to deliberate upon, only a certain number of facts to exchange. Don Nicolino may be a fool but his advice is good."

"If you really think me a fool," said Nicolino, "then there are four men here who are still greater fools than I am, because, knowing me to be a fool, they yet admit me to a share in their councils. For, my friends, call yourselves what you will, you are simply Free Masons, members of a prescribed sect, and you are plotting the downfall of King Ferdinand and the establishment of a Republic, which means high treason, which means death. As to that, Hector Caraffa—who is an aristocratic Danton—and I despise it, because, being nobles, we should only be beheaded, an accident which is no slur on our coat of arms; but as for you, Manthonnet—born leader of men—and you, Schipani—instrument of fate—and Cirillo—man of science—who is below, as you are only courageous, meritorious and of dis-

tinguished talent, being worth some hundreds of us, but having the misfortune to be plebeians, you will just simply be hanged. Ah, my friends! I shall laugh when from the guillotine I see you dangling at the end of your halters, always supposing that the illustrious Don Pasquale di Simone has not, by the Queen's orders, already disposed of me otherwise. Go then, deliberate, and when there is something impossible to be done, which only a fool would undertake, then you can think of me."

The others probably agreed, for, half laughing, half shrugging their shoulders they left Nicolino at his window and descended a winding staircase on the steps of which fell the light of a lamp in a room below. It was beneath the level of the sea, and had probably been intended for the wine cellar of the palace. It was now occupied by a man who sat absorbed in melancholy thought at a stone table. His open mantle revealed a face pale and worn with watching, before him were papers, pens and ink, and a pair of pistols and a dagger lay within reach. He was the famous doctor, Domenico Cirillo.

The three conspirators whom Nicolino had addressed as Schipani, Manthonnet and Hector Caraffa successively entered the pale circle of light cast by the lamp. Each took off hat and mantle, placed pistols and dagger before him, and then began, not to deliberate, but to recount the various bits of news which each had been able to collect.

From time to time the roll of distant thunder was heard, preceded by broad flashes of lightning. They split the dark mass of cloud from end to end and shed a fantastic momentary light on the black rocks of Capri, otherwise indistinguishable from the opaque clouds, which rested on them. Frequent gusts of the dry, suffocating wind which brings the sand of the Libyan deserts even to Naples, came in squalls, causing a phosphorescent agitation on the sea, which became for an instant a lake of flame and then returned to its previous darkness.

Suddenly at the point of Pausilippo appeared a reddish flame, quite different from the phosphorescence of the sea and the sulphurous flashes of the tempest. It seemed to be making straight for the palace of Queen Joanna. As if it had been a signal, a tremendous burst of thunder rolled across the Bay, the clouds above parted, shewing terrible abysses of gloom behind. Loud squalls of wind came rapidly from opposite points of the compass with a sound like a mighty trombone, the waves rose as if heaved up by a submarine eruption. The tempest was let loose and raged like a furious lion over the field of battle.

Nicolino uttered a cry which roused the conspirators below. They rushed up the stairway, and arriving at the window, gazed out at the tempest. They saw that the little boat which was no doubt bringing the expected messenger had been caught by the tempest when half-way across. The little square sail she carried had been instantly taken in, and the boat was now endeavouring to make way by means of two vigorous rowers.

As Hector Caraffa had said, nothing had hindered the young man with the iron heart whom they expected. As had been arranged, more for the safety of the conspirators than of the envoy, sufficiently protected by his French uniform, he had quitted the direct route at Santa Maria, had gone to the shore left his horse at Pozzuoli, averring that it was too tired to go further, and, partly by threats, partly by the offer of a large reward, had induced two fishermen to take him over notwithstanding the weather. They objected, but finally started in the midst of the tears and lamentations of their wives and children. Arrived at Nisida they wished to land their passenger and shelter behind the jetty, but the young man calmly presented his pistols at their heads and after one glance at his composed and resolute countenance they bent to their oars with renewed energy. Emerging from the little gulf of Pozzuoli into the wide Bay of Naples they were exposed to the full force of the tempest which seemed to concentrate its fury on the solitary bark which dared to oppose it.

Hector Caraffa broke the anxious silence which prevailed. "Ropes, ropes, we must find a rope," he cried, wiping the sweat which covered his forehead.

Nicolino sprang up, hastily replaced the plank, rushed over it, and ten minutes later reappeared with a rope taken from a public well. The tempest, meanwhile, seemed to have redoubled its fury, but it had driven on the boat to within a few cable lengths of the palace, and there appeared every chance of her going to pieces on the rock.

By the light burning on the prow which every wave threatened to extinguish, the two mariners could be seen bending to their oars with anxious and terrified faces, while erect, firmly planted in the boat, stood a young man, his hair tossed by the wind, but with a scornful smile on his lips, and apparently inaccessible to fear. He shaded his eyes with his hand as if attempting to discern the outline of the ruin; a flash of lightning shewed him the old building and a group of five anxious men who cried, "Courage," with one voice.

At that instant a huge wave, recoiling from the rock, fell back upon the boat, and, extinguishing the light, seemed to have swallowed it up.

The spectators held their breath, Hector grasped his hair with both hands, but a calm and powerful voice was heard above all the roar of the tempest crying, "A torch!"

This time it was Hector's turn to rush. There were torches stored in a hole in the wall for use on dark nights. Seizing one, he lit it at the lamp below, and appeared on the outer platform of rock holding out his resinous torch towards the boat, which now re-appeared as if from the depths of the sea only a few feet from the rock. The rowers had abandoned their oars, and holding up their arms to Heaven cried aloud to the Madonna and Saint Januarius.

"A rope!" cried the young man.

Nicolino climbed on to the window-sill, Manthonnet held him firmly round the waist, while, carefully measuring the distance he flung one end of the rope

into the boat; Schipani and Cirillo holding tight on to the other end.

Scarcely had they heard the sound of the rope striking the wood than another enormous wave dashed the boat with irresistible force upon the rock. A great crash was heard, followed by a cry of anguish, and boat, mariners and passenger had all disappeared.

But Schipani and Cirillo both exclaimed: "He holds it! he has got it!" and they pulled hard at the rope.

In another moment the sea at the foot of the rock parted, and by the light of Hector's torch they saw the young officer appear. Aided by the rope he climbed the rock, seized the hand held out to him, mounted the platform, and while Hector clasped him in his arms, looked up at his deliverers, and calm and serene as ever, uttered the one phrase:

"I thank you!"

As he said it a flash of lightning appeared to illuminate the whole building, while a terrific peal of thunder shook it to its base, and the sea with a tremendous roar dashed round the two young men's knees.

Hector Caraffa, with all the enthusiasm of the South, lifted his torch in defiance. "Howl, O thunder!" he cried, "blaze, ye lightnings! let the tempest do its worst! We are of the race of the Greeks who burnt Troy and he,"—placing his hand on his friend's shoulder—"he is the descendant of Ajax son of Oïleus, he will escape in spite of the Gods!"

Of the two poor fishermen, whom the shattering of their boat had plunged into the abyss, our five conspirators, superior men though they were, thought not at all as they sprang forward to greet the rescued man now advancing on the arm of his friend the Count di Ruvo. It is always so—though little indeed to the honour of humanity—those who play the chief rôles, those from whom great things are expected, hold all our interest and attention while the inferior beings, useful though they may have been, are swallowed up in the gulf. But for the fishermen the envoy could never have reached the castle of Queen Joanna, yet they perished

in the waves unheeded, even while the first greetings were being exchanged between the six men.

Though his curly black hair and his republican uniform (Hoche, Marceau and Klèber have familiarised us with its heroic and elegant appearance) were saturated and dripping, the envoy, as he stood in the centre of the group, looked a very hero. Why? Perhaps because his eyes, which were set in a pale handsome face beneath arched dark brows, flashed so finely. Certainly they were remarkable. Then one noticed that his face was strangely calm for that of a man who had just escaped death, and that his head and form were of classic mould. He scarcely looked his age—five-and-twenty—but no one who saw him would have doubted his ability to hold any position however responsible and dangerous. That he wore a republican uniform was, of course, an act of imprudence. The conspirators knew, however, that when he had left Rome forty-eight hours ago, neither General Championnet nor he had the least idea of the events which had caused Garat to quit Naples. When the envoy donned his uniform it was for the purpose of presenting himself before the French Ambassador and the Neapolitans would have been obliged to treat it with respect. Now the wearing of it might be construed as an act of defiance; moreover, it would undoubtedly compromise the patriots to whom the first visits were to be paid. Emmanuel di Deo, Galiani and Vitalino had been hung on the mere suspicion of connivance with the French—a warning not to take risks with a Government whose bad faith in modern days recalled that of Carthage in those of antiquity.

The conspirators pressed round Salvato Palmieri—their southern excited gestures and voices contrasting strangely with the calmness of the young man. One would have thought it was they who had just escaped death; he seemed already to have forgotten the waves which thundered a few steps away and scattered their foam and spray over the group. Anxious as the five men were to hear the envoy's news, they insisted on

his accepting from Nicolino Caracciolo* (he had a house close to the castle of Queen Joanna) a complete change of costume. When the young man stood before them again his appearance was transformed, for Caracciolo was a leader of fashion in Naples, and the envoy in Nicolino's clothes might himself have passed as such.

Salvato Palmieri had now for some time been aide-de-camp to General Championnet, then commanding at Rome, to whom Hector Caraffa had written, enquiring whether a revolution in Naples, if it took place, could count on the support of both the French troops and the French Government. Championnet was then about thirty-six, possessing boundless energy and courage combined with the courteous and attractive manners of a man of the world. He was the natural son of a high official who had settled a small estate upon him of which he took the name, and in early youth had shewn his courage by breaking in all the most restive horses he could find.

At eighteen he began the pursuit of the two phantoms known as "Glory" and "Fortune," and joined the Italian troops in Spain. Encountering a Breton regiment in which he found some of his early friends, he obtained leave from his Colonel to join it as a volunteer. Peace brought him back to France, but, in 1789, the cannon of August 10th roused France, and each Department furnished its Volunteer Brigade. Championnet was named chief of that raised by the Drôme and stationed at Besançon. Here he was found by Pichegru, who had known him when both were Volunteers, and who granted his request to be placed on active service.

After this his name deserves to be quoted along with those of Joubert, Hoche, Klèber, Bernadotte and others whose friend he was and under whom he served. They knew him so well, that whenever anything extra difficult, or apparently impossible had to be done, they said with one accord: "Oh, send Championnet!"

*The author had some personal acquaintance with this Nicolino Caracciolo, who in 1860 was still living in the house referred to. He died in 1863 in his eighty-third year.—*Author's note.*

His constant success was rewarded by his becoming first a general of brigade, then of a division guarding the sea coast from Dunkirk to Flushing, until the Peace of Campo Formio sent him back to Paris, where of all his military household he retained only one young aide-de-camp.

Championnet had noticed particularly a young officer as excelling in valour, and as having performed some brilliant action in every engagement which took place. If a town were taken he was first on the rampart. Had a river to be crossed, he found a ford while under fire. At Laubach he had taken a standard. At the head of three hundred men he attacked fifteen hundred English, but when a desperate charge made by the Prince of Wales's regiment forced his men back he disdained to retire along with them.

Championnet, who was watching, saw him disappear in a crowd of enemies. He rallied a hundred men and charged to support him. He found the young officer still erect, his foot on the breast of the English general, whose thigh he had broken with a pistol shot, and surrounded by the dead, but with three bayonet wounds. Championnet got him off the field and sent his own surgeon to him, and when he recovered made him his aide-de-camp.

When he gave his name as Salvato Palmieri, Championnet was considerably astonished, for besides speaking French like a native, he had heard him interrogating both English and German prisoners with equal facility. Salvato explained that having been taken to France as an infant and having finished his education in England and Germany, it was not wonderful that he should speak all three languages as well as his own. Championnet, realizing how extremely useful such a young man might be, retained him when he dismissed the rest and brought him to Paris.

When Bonaparte went to Egypt, Championnet was anxious to follow him, but Barras, to whom he had applied, answered :

“Stay with us, citizen general, we shall need you on this continent.”

And, Joubert succeeding Bonaparte as commander in Italy, desired to have Championnet as general of the army in Rome, which was intended to watch, and if necessary, to threaten Naples.

And this time Barras, who took a special interest in Championnet, remarked, when giving him his instructions:

“Should war break out again you will be the first Republican general commissioned to dethrone a king.”

“The orders of the Directory will be carried out,” replied Championnet with true Spartan simplicity.

And, strangely enough, the promise was to be realized.

The general departed for Italy with Salvato, and being already able to speak Italian, but wanting practice, from that time he spoke nothing else with his aide-de-camp, and even with great foresight applied himself to acquire the Neapolitan patois which Salvato had picked up from his father.

At Milan, Salvato became acquainted with Hector Caraffa, the Comte de Ruvo, whom he introduced to his general as one of the great nobles and most ardent patriots of Naples. The story of Hector's life, which is widely known, sufficed to obtain permission for him to join the staff without any official duty. Both accompanied Championnet to Rome, where the course prescribed by the Directory was as follows. He was to

“Repulse any hostile attack aimed against the independence of the Roman Republic, and to make war upon Naples, should the King attempt to carry out the invasion he had so often threatened.”

Salvato was charged to explain the present miserable condition of the Roman Republic to the Neapolitan patriots. Championnet had begun by turning out all the fiscal officers and was applying any money he could get which was due to the Directory to the immediate needs of the town and the army. The condition of the latter was no better than that of the Republic. Upon

paper it amounted to thirty-two thousand men, in reality to eight thousand, who for three months had not received a farthing of pay, who were destitute of shoes, clothes, and bread, and were practically surrounded by the Neapolitan army, which consisted of sixty thousand men, well clothed, well shod, and regularly paid. By way of munitions, the French army possessed 180,000 cartridges—fifteen shots for each man, and the scarcity of powder was such that at Civita-Vecchia they had actually been unable to fire at a Barbary pirate, which carried off a fishing smack within half-range of the guns of the fort. In all, they had only nine pieces of ordnance, all the artillery had been melted for copper coinage. Some fortresses, indeed, had cannons, but whether by treachery or negligence, no cannon-balls fitted them, and some had no balls at all. The arsenals were as destitute as the forts; they had vainly tried to find guns for two battalions of National Guards, and that in a country in which every man carried a gun on his shoulder if on foot, or slung on his saddle if on horseback.

But Championnet wrote to Joubert, who promised to send him a million cartridges, and a train of ten pieces of artillery. As to cannon balls he had established a foundry which turned out four or five thousand per day. So Salvato, as Championnet's aide-de-camp, was to beg the patriots not to hurry things as the General wanted a month in which to become fit,—not to invade Naples, but to defend himself.

Salvato had also a letter for the French Ambassador explaining the position, and begging him at all hazards to avoid a rupture between the two Courts. This letter, fortunately enclosed in a waterproofed portfolio, had escaped damage from the water. Salvato knew the contents, and could have repeated them word for word, but he required the letter as a guarantee of his good faith.

“What are we to do?” demanded Hector, when the facts had been sufficiently explained.

“We must follow the General's instructions,” replied Cirillo.

"And, in order to do so," said Salvato, "I will go to the Ambassador this very moment."

"You will have to make haste then," said a voice from the head of the stairs, which made everyone start, even Salvato himself. "From what I hear the Ambassador leaves for Paris this very night, or to-morrow morning."

"Velasco!" exclaimed Nicolino and Manthonnet together.

Then Nicolino continued:

"It is our sixth friend, Signor Palmieri, whom we were expecting, and who, by my unpardonable carelessness, has been able to cross the plank which I forgot to remove, both when I brought the rope and the clothes."

"Nicolino! Nicolino!" said Manthonnet, "you will bring us all to the scaffold."

"I have already said so," answered Nicolino indifferently. "But there, why do you join in conspiracy with a fool?"

If Velasco's news was correct, there was not a moment to lose, for the Ambassador's departure, tantamount to a declaration of war, might be disastrous to Championnet, and was exactly what Salvato was bound to prevent. Everyone wished to accompany him to the Embassy, but he refused absolutely. Once his mission were known, anyone seen with him would be lost, either seized by the police, or a mark for the daggers of the Government emissaries.

There was no risk of his losing his way, he had only to follow the coast, keeping the sea on his right hand, and he could not fail to arrive at the Embassy, easily recognised by the tricolour flag, and the fasces sustaining the cap of Liberty.

However, as much for the sake of friendship as of safety, he exchanged his own wet pistols for Nicolino's, and then buckled on his sword under his cloak, hanging it from his carbine holder so that it might not attract notice by striking the ground. It was agreed that he should start first, the others following one by one ten

minutes later; each going home separately by detours among the labyrinth of streets and lanes more puzzling than that of Crete.

Nicolino conducted the newcomer as far as the road, and shewing him the slope of Pausilippo and the few lights yet unextinguished in Mergellina.

"There lies your road," he said, "do not let anyone either follow or converse with you." And with a warm hand-clasp the two young men parted.

Salvato glanced around, the road seemed deserted, the tempest was not quite over, for, though the rain had ceased, there were constant flashes of lightning and mutterings of thunder from all parts of the heavens. As he passed the darkest corner of the palace of Queen Joanna he thought he saw the outline of a man against the wall, but, deciding to take no notice, he walked steadily on.

Twenty paces further he stopped and looked round, he had not been mistaken, a man was crossing the road, seemingly wishing to keep on his left. Ten paces further he thought he distinguished the head of a man above the wall, which here served as a sort of parapet, it promptly disappeared; Hector leant over the wall, but could see no one, only a garden, the trees in which rose to the height of the wall.

Meanwhile, the other man had come up, and was now walking even with him. Salvato pretended to approach him, carefully watching the place where he had seen the head. A flash of lightning shewed a man stepping over the wall and turning, like himself, towards Mergellina.

Salvato put his hand to his belt, assured himself that his pistols were safe, and continued on his way, the two men keeping near him, one a little in advance on his left, the other a little behind on his right. At a short distance they found two fellows occupying the middle of the road, apparently quarrelling, with the discordant cries and gestures peculiar to the lowest classes of Naples.

On the right was the lonely sea, on the left a long

garden wall with a shuttered house behind it. Orange trees and a splendid palm waved above.

Salvato cocked his pistols under his cloak, and, divining a plot when he saw the men did not move, walked straight up to them.

Suddenly two confederates sprang from the shelter of a dark door in the garden wall, and rushed at Salvato from behind. As they did so he shot down the first two men, and having killed one and wounded the other, he unfastened his cloak and flung it away. Turning upon the new assailants, he laid open the face of one with a blow of his sword, and with a sharp thrust severely wounded the other. Then something came hissing toward him, and he felt a sharp pain in the right side of his chest. He seized the knife with his left hand, drew it out, staggered a few feet back, feeling as if the earth were giving way under him. He found himself up against the wall, which seemed to be receding like the ground. A flash of lightning which lit up the sky appeared the colour of blood, he stretched out his arms, let go his sword, and sank down insensible. In his last conscious moment he seemed to see a man advancing upon him and endeavoured to repulse him; then everything vanished, and he uttered a sigh which seemed to be his last.

CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE OF THE PALM TREE

ON the descent from Pausilippo between the Royal Casino and the Lion's Fountain, stands the house known as The House of the Palm Tree, from an unusually fine specimen of these graceful and feathery trees, so tall as to overtop a galaxy of golden oranges by at least two-thirds of its height. It was the ancestral home of the Chevalier di San Felice.

The Chevalier, no longer young, was a man of charming manners, combined with the gentleness and simplicity which often accompanies deep learning. His tastes were many and varied, but were chiefly those of a naturalist and philosopher, a dreamer, who in the study of Nature passed from the visible and material world to the invisible and spiritual one, beholding the Eternal, not in the tempest of Elijah, nor in the burning bush of Moses, but in the Majestic Serenity of the Eternal Love, which embraces the whole universe.

Educated at the college dei Nobili, founded by Charles III., San Felice's chief friend and fellow-pupil was the Prince Joseph Caramanico—whose adventures and distinguished career towards the end of the eighteenth century are not yet forgotten. He was then not only a prince, but a charming and affectionate boy, and, later, a charming man full of honour and loyalty.

In this friendship the part played by the Chevalier was that of Pylades. His Orestes, it must be confessed, was but an idle scholar, who nevertheless obtained quite as many prizes as his industrious friend, and although

his tutors either did not know or did not choose to know the secret of his success, Caramanico was very well aware of it himself, and not ungrateful. When they left college he entered the army while San Felice devoted himself to science. Caramanico procured him an admission to the Order of Knights of Malta, dispensing with the vows, and further secured him an abbey with an income of 2,000 ducats, which, in addition to his own small private fortune, was wealth for a man of San Felice's simple tastes.

About 1783, Caramanico, who had long been Prime Minister of Naples and prime favourite of the Queen, but who, it was whispered, had been undermined by the intrigues of Acton, appeared one evening unannounced at the House of the Palm Tree. He found San Felice in the garden engaged in catching fireflies, being anxious to study the light they gave. He received the Prince with delight, but the latter appeared sad and pre-occupied. They sat down under the palm, and, after a short silence :

"My friend," said the Prince, "I come to say farewell, perhaps for ever. I can fight no longer. I should probably lose my honour in the conflict and certainly my life. To-day the Queen is entirely governed by this intriguing Irishman, who, I believe, will ruin Naples. Well, if the throne is to fall, I, at least, will have no hand in it. I go."

"And whither?" enquired San Felice.

"I have accepted the Embassy at London, it is at least an honourable exile. I take my wife and family, but there is one whom I cannot take and I hope to leave her in your care."

"Her!" said the philosopher in evident dismay.

Caramanico smiled. "Be not anxious," he said, "she is not a woman, only a little child."

San Felice breathed again; the Prince continued :

"In the midst of my troubles I found consolation in the love of a woman. An angel from Heaven, she has returned whence she came, but she has left me a little daughter now five years old. I cannot openly acknow-

ledge her, and the Queen must not know of her existence. I love her dearly, but I fear she has been born under an unlucky star, and I trust to you to care for her. I want to provide for her. Here is a bond for 50,000 ducats which you will invest for her, and which, left to accumulate, will in fourteen or fifteen years have doubled itself; I ask you, meanwhile, to provide for her board and suitable education, and when she comes of age or marries you are to repay yourself."

"You do not love me as I thought," said San Felice, somewhat hurt by this latter stipulation.

"I love you more than any other man in the world, and I am leaving you the only piece of myself which has remained pure and unbroken."

"Listen to me," said San Felice, "I am a lonely man, almost without friends. I am not unhappy with this great book of Nature spread before me, but I do not care for one thing more than another, and I have no one to love me. Let me have your child here, I will love her and care for her, and perhaps she will understand and love me a little in return. The air here is splendid, there is a garden with oranges and butterflies, she will grow tall and graceful like this palm tree. Say, will you let your child come to me?"

Caramanico looked at him with tears in his eyes.

"Yes," he said, "take my child; yes, she will love you. But promise that you will speak of me every day, and try that next to yourself she shall love me better than all else. Adieu, best of friends," said the Prince rising, "you have given me the only happiness, the one consolation possible in this world."

The next day the Prince left for London, and the little Luisa and her attendants were duly installed in the House of the Palm Tree where she led a tranquil and happy life. San Felice found a new and delightful pleasure in superintending her education and watching the development of both body and mind. Caramanico, in 1790, exchanged the Embassy of London for that of Paris, but when the Two Sicilies sent troops against France, he desired to be recalled. Acton, not wishing

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for his presence at Naples, sent him as Viceroy to Sicily, where his excellent government formed a great contrast to the reign of terror under Acton at Naples. The Neapolitans murmured loudly, and whispered that the Queen herself, were it not for her false pride, would gladly replace Acton by Caramanico. One day the Chevalier received the following letter :

“ My friend,

“ I know not the cause, unless it be poison, but in the last ten days my hair has become grey, my teeth are loose, I am hopelessly languid and depressed. Bring Luisa here, start at once, and may you arrive in time to see me again ! ”

Luisa was now a beautiful girl of nineteen, and had never seen her father since he entrusted her to San Felice, who had religiously carried out his promise, and taken care that joint letters were written to the Prince every fortnight. He hastened at once to the harbour and finding a small passenger boat on the point of returning empty to Sicily, immediately engaged it for a whole month. On the third day they landed at Palermo.

The whole town appeared to be in mourning, they passed a church which was hung with black and where the priests recited the prayers for the dying.

“ What is happening ? ” said San Felice to a poor fisherman at the door, “ we have just come from Naples. ”

“ Our father is dying, ” said the man, and kneeling on the steps he prayed aloud that his own life might be taken and the beloved viceroy spared.

At first they were refused admission to the palace, but on San Felice naming himself, the Prince's valet rushed forward and at once took them to his master, whose eyes lit up with delight at seeing them, but who was clearly in the last stage of exhaustion. San Felice left Luisa alone with her father, who questioned her closely, and finding that she had as yet seen no one

who had made any impression on her heart, asked if she would marry San Felice. She replied in the affirmative, and when San Felice returned, the Prince exclaimed joyfully: "She consents, my friend! all is well, she consents!" Luisa extended her hand towards the Chevalier.

"But to what is she consenting?" asked the latter gently.

"My father says he can die in peace if you will marry me. I have answered for myself."

If Luisa had been startled by the sudden proposal, the Chevalier was even more so. He looked at them both in astonishment.

"But it is impossible," he said, though the look which he cast on Luisa contradicted his words.

"Why impossible?" asked the Prince.

"Only look at us both. She stands on the threshold of life, radiant in youth and beauty, ignorant of love—yes, but will she remain ignorant? I am forty-eight, my hair is turning grey, my frame bowed with study. You must see the thing is impossible. Think no more of it, Caramanico, in arranging for our happiness you will only bring misery to us both. One day she will really love—but it will not be me."

"Then," said Luisa, "as I wish to obey you, my father, I will never marry."

The Prince's head sunk on his breast and a tear fell on Luisa's hand. She silently pointed it out to the Chevalier.

"Since, then, you both desire this," said San Felice, "which I also both desire and dread more than anything in the world, I also consent—on one condition."

"What is that?" asked the Prince.

"The marriage is not to take place for a year during which Luisa must see the world she has not seen and learn to know the young people she has not known. If at the end of the year she still cares for no one and says: 'In my father's name, my friend, fulfil your promise,' I shall then have no further objection to make. But I have yet something to say, Giuseppe, listen. I

believe in the purity and the chastity of this child as I should believe in an angel,—but—she is a woman, she may fail.—In such a case, I swear on this crucifix that I will have no words for the sin but those of mercy and pardon, and may everlasting punishment overtake me if I act otherwise. Give me your hand, Luisa.”

Caramanico took the crucifix and held it out to them. They held it in a joint clasp. “Caramanico,” said San Felice, “I swear to you on this crucifix that this day year, if Luisa still thinks as she does now, she shall be my wife. And now, my friend, die in peace! I keep my oaths.”

Caramanico died the following night.

Palermo was sunk in the deepest mourning; the funeral which took place at night was magnificent. The cathedral blazed with torches and tapers, and—strange relic of the Dark Ages—the Prince's horses were not allowed to survive their master. The ceremony over, the last torch was extinguished, and, silent as a procession of phantoms, the vast crowd dispersed in the dark and silent streets, where not a glimmer of light could be seen, a whole city plunged into darkness under the wings of Death. On the following day San Felice and Luisa re-embarked for Naples.

The first three months passed in the usual quietude, then San Felice bought the most elegant carriage and finest horses he could procure, engaged more servants, and shewed himself with Luisa every day on the fashionable promenades of Naples. The nearest house to his own, only separated by a slight garden barrier, belonged to the Duchess Fusco, whose family had always been intimate with his own. She was a widow and very wealthy, some ten years older than Luisa, and she had hitherto declined all invitations on the plea of preferring a retired life. She now, however, accepted them, and the two soon became intimate friends. But to all admirers of the other sex Luisa remained as adamant; rejecting the distinction offered by the Prince Moliterno, the elegance and wit of Rocca-Romana, and the wealth of Andrew Baker. The year of probation

ended, she and San Felice were married very quietly, in the presence of the Prince Francis, who had with difficulty induced San Felice to become his librarian, and who wished therefore, to shew his appreciation of the fact.

The marriage concluded, Luisa only asked to reduce the household to its former footing. The extra servants with the one exception of her own maid, Nina, were dismissed, the carriage and horses sold, and the old governess retired with a pension to her beloved Portici. Of all the worldly brilliance which had surrounded Luisa during the last nine months, the only remaining trace was her intimacy with the Duchess Fusco. This, San Felice highly approved, and the old door communicating between the two mansions was re-opened so that their intercourse was perfectly unrestrained. A year passed in perfect happiness, then some imprudent remarks of the Duchess concerning Lady Hamilton were reported to the Queen, and the Duchess received an intimation from the police that her health would benefit by a residence on her country estates. One of her friends, who had not only spoken, but, what was worse, had written inadvisably, shared her exile. They departed for the Basilicata, leaving the keys of the house with Luisa.

Luisa's solitude now became extreme, for the Prince Royal, interested by his librarian's knowledge and conversation, made more and more demands upon San Felice's time. She became, not unhappy, she wanted nothing that she had not got, but languid, and absorbed in aimless dreams of the unknown. One day, when more than ever lost in reverie, her foster-brother, known as "Michael the Fool," not on account of lack of wit, but because of his numerous escapades, came to see her. Though he wore the white drawers and the red cap of the ordinary Neapolitan fisherman, yet the tie between them was a very real one, as is the case with most primitive peoples, and permitted him, unrebuked, to address her as if she had been his actual sister in his own rank of life. He had told her of the wonderful

predictions of an old Albanian gipsy, and with a sort of vague desire to hear something of the future even if she did not believe it, Luisa, knowing that her husband would be detained that evening by the Nelson festivities, asked him to bring old Nanno to see her that very night. Michael brought her accordingly, but the old woman had only time to inform Luisa that her fate was linked with that of a man over whom at that moment some great danger was impending, when in the street, immediately outside, they heard two pistol shots, succeeded by cries, oaths, then the clashing of swords.

"Madame," cried the maid, rushing into the room, "they are murdering a man under the garden wall."

"Michael, Michael," cried Luisa, stretching her arms towards him, "you are a man, you have a knife, will you not try to help?"

"By the Madonna, I will!" exclaimed Michael. And he opened the window, and was just going to leap down into the road, when he uttered a cry of terror, and murmuring: "It is Pasquale di Simone, the Queen's own assassin!" crouched down below the window.

"Then," cried Luisa, rushing towards the entrance, "I will go myself."

Nanno moved as if to hold her back, then, shaking her head:

"Go, ill-fated one!" she said, "go to meet thy fate!"

Short as the distance was to the garden entrance, the assassins had already vanished when Luisa opened it. The body of a young man sank back into the garden. With a strength hitherto unsuspected by her she dragged the motionless weight inside, closed the door, bolted it, and called on the others to help. Michael raised the young officer in his arms, Nina took his feet, Luisa supported the head, and together they bore him into the house. Nanno remained behind seeking for various medicinal herbs in the garden, and muttering magic spells while she sought.

Michael looked at the young man and shook his head.

"Little sister," he said, "what will the Chevalier say when he sees this handsome young man brought in here by you in his absence?"

"He will pity him, Michael, and say that I did well," answered Luisa with confidence.

"Very likely, if it were an ordinary assassination, but when the assassin happens to be Pasquale di Simone, do you think an officer of the Prince's household can shelter a man hunted down by the Queen's assassin?"

"You are right," said Luisa after a moment's thought. "But what are we to do, I cannot abandon a man in this condition?"

"Little sister," said Michael, "have you not the keys of the Duchess's house which is now empty?"

"Oh, yes, you are right, Michael, you are right!" cried Luisa. "Yes, we will take him there, into a room looking on the garden. Oh! thank you. If only he lives, poor young man, we can care for him there."

"And," continued Michael, "as long as your husband does not know, he can always plead ignorance. He could not if we told him."

"No, you are right again, he would never save himself by a lie, and he must not have to choose between his duty as the Prince's friend and his conscience as a Christian. There must be no trace left in the house."

They conveyed the wounded man along a passage which led to the Duchess's house, where he was placed, still quite insensible, on a bed in one of the rooms. Luisa and Nina then hastily returned to their own house where the Chevalier was already knocking at the bolted door. Michael, under Nanno's directions, pounded herbs in a mortar, and Nanno herself carefully applied the juice thus extracted to the gaping wound made by Pasquale's knife.

CHAPTER IV

THE KING AND QUEEN

IT was about two in the morning when the King and Queen left the English Embassy. The King, much affected by the scene which had taken place, went straight to his own apartments. He considered the situation serious, and in such circumstances there was one man whom he liked to consult, and whose advice he had generally found to be good. As he left the banqueting-room he whispered to Cardinal Ruffo: "I shall expect you at the Palace to-night."

Cardinal Fabrizio Ruffo, a Calabrian, the hero of many scandalous adventures, had military tastes; he had fortified Ancona and was ambitious of military or naval employment. He was still young, was brave and bold and better at putting an edge on a sword than at saying Mass. As the Queen disliked him he had obtained no preferment.

Within ten minutes of his arrival in his own rooms, the usher-in-waiting informed the King that Cardinal Ruffo enquired if it were His Majesty's pleasure to receive him.

"It certainly is," cried the King, so that the Cardinal could hear him. "Bring him in at once!"

The Cardinal, hearing this did not wait to be announced, but entered. The King flung himself into an armchair and signed to Ruffo to be seated, an intimation which was promptly obeyed.

"Well, Eminence, what do you think of all this?" demanded the King.

"I think it is a very serious matter," replied Ruffo, "and that it is fortunate Your Majesty incurred it in doing honour to England, as England will be bound in honour to support you."

"What do you think of this bulldog of a Nelson? Speak freely, Cardinal."

"I think he is a lion in courage, and a genius in military matters, otherwise, fortunately, only mediocre."

"And why 'fortunately?'"

"Because with two decoys you can lead him as you will."

"What are they?"

"Love and ambition. The love is Lady Hamilton's business, the ambition is yours. He is not well-born, and has no education. He has attained his rank solely by merit, by losing an eye at Calvi, an arm at Teneriffe, and getting scalped at Aboukir. If you will treat him as a great noble he will be intoxicated, and then you can do what you will with him. But are you sure of Lady Hamilton?"

"The Queen says so, I understand."

"Then that is all you want, if you have that woman she will give you both the husband and the lover. Both are mad about her."

"I am afraid she may play the prude."

"Emma Hamilton a prude!" said Ruffo with the most profound contempt. "Your Majesty need not imagine it for one moment."

"I did not suppose she would act the prude for prudery's sake," said the King. "Good Heavens, no!"

"For what, then?"

"Well, your Nelson is no beauty, with one arm and one eye and a broken head. If it takes all that to make a hero I prefer to remain as I am."

"As to that, women have odd ideas, besides, Lady Hamilton is devoted to the Queen. What she does not do for love she will do for friendship."

"Then that is settled," said the King, with the air of one committing to Providence something too trouble-

some for himself. "Now," he continued, "I am sure you have an opinion to give on this other matter?"

"Certainly, there is only one thing to be done, Your Majesty has a treaty of alliance with your nephew, the Emperor of Austria."

"I have treaties of alliance with every state in Europe, so much the worse for me!"

"Well, but, Sire, are you not bound to act with Austria and Russia and to furnish thirty thousand men to the next coalition?"

"Quite so. Well?"

"Whatever pressure may be put on you, Sire, on no account let your troops begin hostilities before Austria and Russia have begun themselves."

"Certainly not. I have not the remotest idea of fighting France all by myself. But, Eminence, suppose France does not wait for the Coalition? She has actually declared war, suppose she really makes it?"

"Judging by what I hear from Rome, Sire, I think I may assert that the French are not in a position to make war upon you at present."

"That is some comfort, anyhow."

"Your Majesty asked only for one piece of advice, but the first entails a second. Am I permitted to offer it?"

"Good gracious, yes. Out with it!"

"If I were Your Majesty I would write myself to my Imperial nephew, and ask him, confidentially, not diplomatically, when he expected to take the field, and I should regulate my movements by his."

"Most Eminent, you are quite right. I will write at once."

"Have you a trustworthy messenger, Sire?"

"There's my courier, Ferrari."

"But is he one you can trust, trust, trust?"

"Good gracious, Cardinal, do you expect me to produce a man who can be trusted three times over! Think how difficult it is to find one I can trust once."

"How often can you trust Ferrari?"

"He is a long way better than the rest, I have had proofs of his fidelity."

"Where is he?"

"How should I know! Somewhere about, all booted and spurred ready to start any hour of the day or night."

"Well, better write first, we will find him afterwards."

"Easier said than done, your Eminence. Where the devil, at this time of night, am I to find paper, pens, and ink?"

"The Bible says: 'Quaere et invenies.'"

"What is that? I don't understand Latin."

"Seek, and thou shalt find."

The King went to his writing-table, pulled the drawers out one after another and not finding any writing materials. "The Bible is a liar," he observed.

Then falling back in his armchair, "I ask your pardon, Cardinal," he said penitently, and, with a deep sigh, "Oh! how I loathe writing!"

"But Your Majesty has decided to write, this very night?"

"Certainly, only as you see, there is nothing here. I shall have to wake everybody up, and you understand if the King wants to write neither paper, pens, nor ink can be found. I should have to ask the Queen for all that, she has plenty, she is always writing. But as for me, if they knew I had written a letter they would think the whole State must be in danger, which perhaps it is. 'The King wrote a letter!!' 'But to whom did he write?' 'Why did he write?' It would upset the whole palace."

"Sire, allow me to find what you have sought in vain." And the Cardinal disappeared with a bow and returned presently bearing paper, pens, and ink. The King regarded him with admiration. "Now, where the deuce did Your Eminence find all that?" he demanded.

"Quite naturally, among the ushers' belongings."

"But I had strictly forbidden the fellows to have any."

"But, Your Majesty, they must have them in order to write down the names of persons begging for an audience."

"I have never seen any."

"Because they are hidden away in a cupboard. I have found the cupboard and here we are."

"Most Eminent, you are clearly a man of resource! And now," continued the King in a melancholy tone, "is it really necessary that this letter should be in my handwriting?"

"It would be much better so, it will seem more confidential."

"Then you must dictate it, or I shall be two hours in writing half a page. Ah! I do trust San Nicandro may be damned for Time and all Eternity, for having made me the donkey-I am."

The Cardinal dipped a new pen in the ink and handed it to the King. "Since Your Majesty commands," he said with a low bow, and he dictated:

"Most Excellent Brother, Cousin and Nephew, Our Ally and Confederate.

"I must inform you without delay of what occurred last evening at the English Embassy. Lord Nelson has landed at Naples on his return from Aboukir; and on Sir William Hamilton giving an entertainment in his honour, the Citizen Garat, Minister of the Republic, took the opportunity of declaring war against me on behalf of his government.

"Most Excellent Brother, Cousin and Nephew, Our Ally and Confederate, I desire to know what arrangements you have made for the conduct of the approaching war, and especially at what date you expect to take the field, as I wish to act at the same time and in concert with you. The courier who takes this letter may be trusted to bring me your reply. I await Your Majesty's instructions and will regulate my own course in every point by what I hear.

"I conclude by wishing Your Majesty all possible prosperity, and am, Your Brother, Cousin, and Uncle, Ally and Confederate.

"FERDINAND B."

"When I think," said the King, "that it would have taken me the whole blessed night to write that letter! Thanks, my dear Cardinal, thanks. But," he added uneasily, "what are we to do for an envelope?"

"We must make one," said Ruffo.

"There's another thing San Nicandro never taught me. It is true that as he forgot to teach me to write he might not think it necessary."

"Does Your Majesty permit?" asked Ruffo.

"I should think I did," said the King, rising. "Take my chair, Cardinal."

The Cardinal took the King's seat, and with great dexterity proceeded to cut and fold the sheet of paper intended to cover the Royal missive. The King looked on admiringly. "Now," said Ruffo, "will Your Majesty kindly tell me where to find your seal?"

"I will give it you," said the King. "Do not disturb yourself, it is here." The letter was sealed and the King addressed it. Then, resting his head on his hand, he became extremely thoughtful.

"Is it permitted to enquire Your Majesty's thoughts?" asked the Cardinal.

"I am anxious," said the King. "I should prefer no one to know either that I have written this letter, nor by whom it is sent."

"In that case," said Ruffo, laughing, "Your Majesty had better have me assassinated when I leave the palace."

"You, my dear Cardinal, you are another myself. Oh!" as Ruffo bowed low, "it is no great compliment."

"But what are we to do, sire? We must get at Ferrari somehow. If I only knew where he was I could go and find him."

"So could I," said the King.

"But you said he was in the palace."

"And so he is, only the palace is a large place. But wait a moment. I am a greater idiot even than I thought."

The King opened his bedroom door and whistled, a beautiful spaniel sprang from his mat, put his paws on

the King's breast, and licked his face, which the King seemed to enjoy as much as the dog.

"Ferrari brought him up," said the King, "he will find him for us." And speaking as he might have done to a child: "Where is that poor Ferrari, Jupiter? We want Ferrari. Find Ferrari, Jupiter!"

Jupiter understood perfectly, he jumped up and down the room, uttering sounds of pleasure and then scratched at a door opening on a secret passage. "Good dog!" said the King.

And he lit a taper, and opening the door, "Seek, Jupiter, seek," he said. The Cardinal, both interested, and not wishing to leave the King alone, followed.

Jupiter ran down the passage and scratched at the door at the end. Ferdinand unlocked the door which led into a deserted anti-chamber. Jupiter went straight to a door on the opposite side and put his paws on it.

"Come, Cardinal, we are burning now," said the King.

The door, when opened, revealed a narrow staircase; Jupiter rushed up it, and began scratching at a fourth door, uttering little excited cries. "Hush, hush!" said Ferdinand, opening it. Sure enough, there lay the courier fully dressed, asleep on a camp-bed. Jupiter, notwithstanding his excitement, at a sign from the King retired quietly behind him. Ferdinand went up to the bed, and touched the sleeper lightly on the shoulder. The man sprang up in a second, with the bewildered look of one startled in his first sleep, but, instantly recognizing the King, he hastily put his feet to the ground and stood at attention, awaiting the Royal orders.

"Can you start at once?" enquired the King.

"Certainly, sire."

"Can you go to Vienna without stopping?"

"Yes, sire."

"And how many days will you take to get there?"

"Last time, sire, I took five days and six nights; but I believe now it can be done in twelve hours less."

"When you arrive at Vienna how long will you require to rest?"

"Just as long as it will take Your Majesty's correspondent to write his answer."

"Then you might be back in twelve days?"

"In less if there is no accident and they do not keep me waiting."

"Go down to the stables, saddle a horse yourself. Go as far as possible with the same horse, you must risk injuring it. Leave it at some post house, and pick it up on your return. You are to tell no one where you are going."

"Certainly not, sire."

"You are to deliver this letter into the Emperor's own hands, and to no one else. You will bring the reply to me, and not allow any one, not even the Queen, to see it."

"I quite understand, sire."

"Have you plenty of money?"

"Yes, sire."

"Then get off at once."

"I go, sire."

Ferrari slipped the King's letter into a pocket made in the lining of his waistcoat, tucked a small packet of linen under his arm, took his courier's cap and prepared to descend the stairs.

"But are you not going to say good-bye to Jupiter?" asked the King.

"I did not presume, sire."

"Oh, embrace each other, you are old friends, and fellow servants."

"I thank Your Majesty," said the courier, and flung his arms round the dog who returned the caress in his own fashion. The courier dashed a tear from his eye and fled down the staircase. Said the Cardinal:

"Unless I am much mistaken, sire, that man would gladly die for Your Majesty."

"I believe you," said Ferdinand. "I hope to reward him some day." They now returned to the King's room by the way they had left it, carefully closing the

doors behind them. They found the Queen's usher awaiting them in the anti-chamber with a letter from Her Majesty.

"What!" said the King, glancing at the clock, "at three in the morning! It must be something very important."

"Sire, the Queen saw your room was still lighted, and concluded Your Majesty had not yet gone to bed."

The King opened the letter with the repugnance he always shewed on receiving letters from his wife. "Confound them!" said he, as he saw the first lines, "it is all up with my hunt to-morrow."

"Dare I ask Your Majesty what news the letter brings?"

"Oh! yes, Cardinal, you may ask. The letter says that on account of important tidings received, the Queen and General Acton have decided to hold an Extraordinary Council of State this very morning. Confound them both! I do not interfere with them, why cannot they do as I do, and leave me in peace!"

"Sire," said Ruffo, "for once I am afraid Her Majesty and the General are right. A Council of State appears to me absolutely necessary, and the sooner it takes place, the better."

"In that case you must be there, Cardinal."

"I, sire? I have no right to be present at a Council."

"I have the right to require your presence."

"I accept, sire," said Ruffo with an obeisance. "The others will bring their brilliant abilities, I can only offer you my devotion."

"That is well," and addressing the usher: "Tell the Queen that I will come to the Council at the time appointed which is nine o'clock."

The usher bowed and retired. Ruffo was also retiring when they heard the sound of a horse passing under the palace archway. The King seized Ruffo's hand.

"That is Ferrari starting," he said, "Eminence, you shall be one of the first to hear what my dear nephew has to say in the matter. And now, good-night! Ah, they had better mind what they are about at the Council,

I can promise the Queen and General Acton that they will not find me in the best of tempers."

"Bah! sire," said the Cardinal, laughing. "La nuit portera conseil."

The King went into his bed-room and rang furiously. His valet, terrified, rushed in, thinking he must be ill.

"Undress me at once, and let me get to bed," he cried in a voice of thunder. "And another time see that the shutters are properly closed so that all the world does not see my room is still lighted at three o'clock in the morning."

Scarcely had the Queen reached her private apartments when she was informed that General Acton enquired if Her Majesty would receive him as he had two important facts to communicate. Apparently, however, Her Majesty was expecting someone else for she answered impatiently :

"Let him wait in the saloon; I will come as soon as I am at liberty."

All pretence at love-making between Queen Caroline and Acton had ceased long ago. He remained the "Queen's favourite" in name, just as he was Prime Minister, which did not prevent there being other ministers as well. Only a political tie united them, each profited by the influence the other could exert.

The Queen hastily discarded all her festal attire, robe, flowers, diamonds and rouge. She slipped on a white dressing-gown, then took a taper, went down a long passage, and having crossed a whole suite of rooms, arrived at last at a solitary room very simply furnished, and communicating with the outer world by means of a secret staircase of which the Queen had one key, and her chief of secret police, Pasquale di Simone, had another. The windows of this room remained constantly closed and not a ray of light entered. A bronze lamp was securely fixed in the middle of the table, and was provided with a shade which cast the light of the lamp down on the table, leaving the rest of the room in shadow.

Here informers brought their denunciations. If they feared recognition they might wear a mask, or might in the anti-chamber put on one of those terrible penitential robes in which the wearer might be taken for a spectre; the holes left for the eyes resembling those in a Death's head. Three inquisitors generally presided, whose names have acquired a dismal celebrity. Castel-Cicala, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guidobaldi, vice-president of the Junta, and Vanni, procurator fiscal. The populace, observing that the shutters of this room remained always closed, called it the "Dark Chamber," and had formed a tolerably correct idea as to the use made of it. To-night, however, the chamber was empty, the lamp extinguished, and only the monotonous tic-tac of a large clock broke the funereal silence which prevailed in the room.

Just as the Queen entered, taper in hand, pale as Lady Macbeth, a whirring sound was heard and the clock struck half-past two. The Queen, startled, hesitated for a moment, then assuring herself that the room was indeed empty, she slowly and thoughtfully seated herself at the table, which, unlike that in the King's room, had an ample provision of writing materials, and was heaped up with official-looking documents.

The Queen turned the papers absently over, without attempting to read them. Her mind was evidently elsewhere, and her power of hearing at the utmost tension. Unable to sit still any longer, she went to the door leading to the secret staircase, put her ear to it, and listened intently.

After a few moments she heard the sound of a key turning in the door below. "At last!" she murmured. Then opening the door against which she stood, "Is that you, Pasquale?" she asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty," said a man's voice at the foot of the staircase.

"You are exceedingly late," said the Queen angrily.

"It is only by good luck that I come at all," replied the voice drawing nearer and nearer.

“How is that? What do you mean?”

“Because we had a rough customer,” said the man, appearing at length at the door. “Thanks to God and Saint Pasquale we have done our work and done it well; but it cost us dear.”

So saying he deposited on a chair something wrapped up in a mantle which gave forth a metallic clink as he put it down. The Queen looked on with a mixed expression of curiosity and disgust. “What has it cost us?” she asked.

“Only one man killed and three wounded!”

“Well! The widow shall have a pension and the wounded men some compensation. There were many then?”

The officer bowed his thanks. “No, madame,” he said, “the man was alone but he fought like a lion. I threw my knife at him at a distance of ten paces or I should have fared like the rest.”

“Then you took the papers by force?”

“Oh! no, madame, not at all. He was quite dead.”

“Ah!” said the Queen shuddering, “then you were obliged to kill him?”

“Obliged, indeed! And yet I confess I am sorry. If it had not been for Your Majesty’s service.”

“What! you regret having killed a Frenchman? I did not suppose you had such tender regard for the soldiers of the Republic.”

“This was no Frenchman,” said Pasquale, shaking his head.

“What!” said the Queen, “surely you have not made some terrible blunder. I carefully described a Frenchman coming on horseback from Capua to Pozzuoli.”

“Exactly, madame, and thence by boat to the palace of Queen Joanna.”

“An aide-de-camp of General Championnet.”

“Oh, yes, it is the right man.”

“We shall see. What have you done with the body?”

“Ah, madame, I heard a patrol coming at that

moment, and fearing to compromise Your Majesty, I left it to them to pick up the dead and care for the wounded."

"Then they will see he was a French officer."

"How, madame? Here is his mantle, here are his pistols and his sword which I picked up on the field of battle. Ah, he could use his weapons, I assure you. As to papers, there was nothing on him but this case, and a rag of paper which has stuck to it."

And Pasquale threw on the table a leather case stained with blood, to which was adhering a piece of paper which might have been a letter. The Queen put out her hand, but, as if disliking to touch these ensanguined relics, stopped half-way.

"What have you done with the uniform?" she asked.

"That's another thing which nearly put me on the wrong track! He had no uniform, none at all! Under his cloak he had a great-coat of green velvet with black fastenings. As there was a tremendous storm, he must have borrowed it from some friend and left his uniform in exchange."

"It is very strange," said the Queen, "the description given to me was very precise. However, the papers will show whether it was the right man or not."

And she opened the case, staining her gloves with red as she did so, and drew out a letter addressed:

"To the Citizen Garat, Ambassador of the French Republic, at Naples."

The Queen broke the seals without ceremony, and uttered an exclamation of joy as she saw the first lines. Her pleasure evidently increased as she proceeded, and having come to the end:

"You are a very valuable servant, Pasquale," she said. "I will take care that your fortune is made."

"Your Majesty promised me that a long time ago," replied the sbirro.

"You can depend on me, I shall keep my word. Meanwhile, here is something on account."

She took a piece of paper and wrote a few lines. "Here is an order for a thousand ducats, five hundred for you, the rest for your men."

"Thank you, madame," said Pasquale, blowing on the paper in order to dry the ink before pocketing it. "But I have not yet told Your Majesty all there is to tell."

"Neither have I asked all I have to ask, but, first, I must read this letter again." The second reading appeared quite as satisfactory as the first had been. Having finished, "Well, my good Pasquale," she said, "what more have you to relate?"

"Only this, madame. This young man was in the palace of Queen Joanna from half-past eleven until one in the morning, and, as he changed his uniform for a civilian costume during that time, he cannot have been alone, and probably had letters from his General for others as well as for the French Ambassador."

"That is precisely what I was thinking," replied the Queen. "Have you no idea who these other persons may be?"

"Not yet, but I hope soon to have some information. I had ordered eight men for this night's work and, supposing that six would be enough to dispose of our aide-de-camp—a miscalculation which nearly cost me dear—I detailed two of them to watch the road above Queen Joanna's palace with orders to follow anyone who came out either before or after my man did, and try to ascertain who they were, or at least where they lived. They have orders to meet me at the Giant's Statue, and with Your Majesty's permission I will go and see if they are there now."

"Go, and if they are there bring them here, I will question them myself."

Left alone, the Queen glanced carelessly at the table and noticed the second paper which Pasquale had detached from the leather case, and thrown upon the table, where it had remained unobserved. It was a letter written on excellent paper and the fine, aristocratic handwriting was evidently that of a woman.

It began, "Dear Nicolino," and one glance sufficed to tell the Queen that it was a love letter.

Unfortunately for the gratification of her curiosity the whole page was soaked in blood. The date, Sept. 20th, was legible and a few words at the end, wherein the writer expressed her regret at being unable to come to the usual trysting-place because she would be in attendance on the Queen who was going to meet Admiral Nelson. The only signature was "E."

For some moments the Queen was hopelessly puzzled. A letter of this sort, dated Sept. 20th, written by a lady who excused her absence because she was in attendance on the Queen, could not possibly be meant for the French aide-de-camp, who at that date, moreover, would have been fifty leagues from Naples. The only explanation, which the Queen soon arrived at, was that the letter must have been already in the coat pocket when lent to the officer, who had put his case in the same pocket without noticing it, and the blood from his wound had fastened the two together. She rose from her seat, went to the chair on which Pasquale had thrown his bundle, and unfolding it, found the sabre and pistols. Both mantle and sabre were evidently part of a cavalry officer's regulation equipment. But the pistols were quite different. They were mounted in silver and bore the stamp of the Royal Neapolitan manufactory, and had the letter "N," engraved on a small silver plate, no doubt standing for the "Nicolino" to whom the letter had been written. The Queen put them aside with the letter, just as di Simone returned with his two satellites.

They brought no news of importance. Five or six minutes after the officer had come out they thought they saw a boat with three persons in it seemingly rowing towards the town. As they could not follow it they paid no further attention to it. Presently three persons appeared at the gate opening on the road from Pausi-lippo, who looked cautiously to see that the road was clear and then proceeded upwards in the opposite direction to that taken by the aide-de-camp. The two spies

followed. Presently one of the three turned to the right and calling out "Au revoir" to his friends, disappeared among the aloes and cactus. By his voice and activity he must have been quite young. The other two, soon perceiving that they were followed, turned sharply round and presenting their pistols at the two men, said sternly, "A step further and you are dead men!" The two spies, who had no orders to fight, and were only armed with knives, stood still, and watched until the others disappeared from sight.

The Queen intimated that Pasquale and his subordinates might now go. She then threw the cloak and sabre into a cupboard and took with her the letter case, pistols and letter. She carefully locked up the two first, retaining the blood-stained note, with which she entered the saloon where Acton was still awaiting her.

He arose and bowed, showing no signs of impatience at her long delay. The Queen went straight towards him.

"You are a chemist, are you not?" she asked.

"Not in the usual acceptation of the word, madame," replied Acton, "but I have some knowledge of chemistry."

"Would it be possible to efface the blood stains from this letter without also obliterating the writing?"

Acton surveyed the letter doubtfully.

"Madame," he said, "providence has ordained, that for the just punishment of those who shed blood, it should be extremely difficult to efface the traces left by it. In this case it is entirely a question of the composition of the ink; if it be only ordinary writing-ink the words will disappear, but if, which is unlikely, it should contain nitrate of silver or animal charcoal they will probably remain."

"Well, do your best, it is important that I should know the contents of that letter."

Acton bowed. The Queen continued:

"You said you had two facts of importance to communicate. I await them."

"General Mack arrived this evening during the enter-

tainment. As I had invited him, he came to my house, where I found him on my return."

"He is welcome. I think Providence must be on our side. And your second piece of news, sir?"

"Is no less important than the first. I have had a few words with Admiral Nelson, and, in the matter of money, he is disposed to do all Your Majesty wishes."

"Thank you, that completes a satisfactory chain of events." Caroline then went to the window, put the curtains aside and looked across at the King's apartments. They were still lighted.

"Fortunately the King is still up," she remarked. "I will send him word that we have an Extraordinary Council this morning, at which his presence will be necessary."

"I believe he has planned a hunt for this morning," said the Minister.

"Indeed," said the Queen contemptuously, "then he must put it off." And taking a pen she wrote her note and desired the usher to take it to the King. And seeing Acton still standing as if waiting for final instructions:

"Good-night, my dear General," she said, with a gracious smile, "I am sorry to have kept you so late, but when you know all that has happened you will acknowledge that my time has not been wasted."

She held out her hand to Acton, who kissed it respectfully, then bowed, and was retiring.

"By-the-way," said the Queen, "the King will be in a very bad temper at the Council."

"I imagine so," said Acton, smiling.

"Warn your colleagues to give no information and merely to answer direct questions. The King and myself must be the only actors in this performance."

"I am sure Your Majesty will have the better part," said the Minister.

"I think so," said the Queen. "We shall see."

Acton bowed again, and finally took his leave.

"Ah!" said the Queen as she rang for her maids, "if Emma only keeps her word all will be well."

CHAPTER V

THE COUNCIL OF STATE

AT a quarter-past nine everyone had assembled except the King. Then the folding-doors in the Council room were flung open, and the ushers announced :

“ His Majesty the King.”

Ferdinand's air of sulky annoyance was a great contrast to the self-satisfied and cheerful countenance of the Queen. And Jupiter followed suit with hanging head and tail between his legs. By way of protest the King was in hunting attire, although the hunt had been postponed to another day. At his entrance every one rose, including the Queen. Ferdinand looked at her sideways, shook his head and sighed, as if recognizing in her an obstacle which continually interfered with his pleasures. He bowed right and left, giving a special recognition to the Cardinal, and then said in melancholy tones :

“ Gentlemen, I am indeed grieved at having had to disturb you on a day when, like myself, you probably hoped to be at liberty to attend to your own affairs. I assure you it is not my fault, but I am informed there are pressing matters of great importance to consider, which the Queen thinks can only be dealt with in my presence. Her Majesty will explain these matters; you must consider them and give me your advice. Be seated, gentlemen.”

Then seating himself a little behind the rest and opposite the Queen, “ Come here, my poor Jupiter !” he said. “ It will be pleasant for you and me, will it not ?”

“Oh! gentlemen,” said the Queen, annoyed as usual by her husband’s mode of speaking, “the matter is quite simple, and if the King chose he could explain it in very few words.”

And, as everybody listened with the utmost attention, she continued:

“The French Ambassador, Citizen Garat, left Naples last night after having declared war upon us.”

“And,” said the King, “let us add that we did not invite this declaration of war, and that it remains to be seen whether England will help us. But that is General Acton’s business.”

“And Admiral Nelson’s,” said the Queen. “He has just shewn at Aboukir what can be done by genius and courage combined.”

“None the less, madame,” replied the King, “I do not hesitate to tell you that war with France is a serious matter.”

“But less serious,” said the Queen sharply, “since Bonaparte, conqueror, as he calls himself, of Dego, Montenotte, Arcola, and Mantua, is now shut up in Egypt, where he will have to stay until France can build a new fleet to fetch him back, which I hope will give him time to see the radishes grow, which the Directory instructed him to sow on the banks of the Nile.”

“Quite so,” replied the King with equal acidity, “but if Bonaparte is out of the way, who, indeed, is truly modest if he only calls himself the victor of Arcola, etc., when he might very well add half-a-dozen more names to those you have cited, France still has Massena, Bernadotte, Moreau and a few other conquerors, quite enough for us here who have never conquered anything at all. I am forgetting Championnet, the victor of the Dunes, who, you may remember, is only thirty leagues distant—three days’ march.”

The Queen shrugged her shoulders with a contemptuous smile intended for Championnet, whose unpleasant position she knew. The King thought it aimed at him. “If I am wrong by two or three leagues,” he said, “it

is no more. Since the French have occupied Rome I have enquired the distance often enough."

"Oh! I do not question your geographical knowledge, sire," replied the Queen, pouting her Austrian lip.

"No, I am aware, you only doubt my political wisdom. Of one thing I am sure. If I were one of my own soldiers I should have deserted and turned brigand long ago. The brigands, at least, fight and get killed for themselves. My soldiers, who have not a cent's worth of property, and are compelled to fight, have nothing to fight for, and they will run away at the first shot."

"Sire," said Ariola, "I am compelled to own there is a good deal of truth in what you say."

"As to that," replied the King, "I always do speak the truth—when I am not obliged to lie, that is! Now, let us see—I understand I have 65,000 men—there they are in battle array, in their new Austrian uniforms, musket on shoulder, sword at side, haversack on back. Who is going to lead them? Is it you, Ariola?"

"Sire," answered Ariola, "I cannot be both Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief."

"And you prefer being Minister of War. I quite understand! That's one disposed of. Now, Pignatelli, would it suit you to command Ariola's 65,000 men?"

"Sire," replied the General addressed, "I should not like to undertake so great a responsibility."

"That's two then. And you, Colli?" continued the King.

"Nor I, either, sire."

"You, Parisi?"

"Sire, I am only a brigadier."

"Yes, you would all like to command a brigade, perhaps even a division. But if there is a plan of campaign to draw up, strategy to consider, and a formidable enemy to encounter, not one of you can do it!"

"Your Majesty need not trouble about a General-in-Chief," said the Queen, "he is already found."

“ Indeed !” said Ferdinand. “ Not one of my people, I trust ?”

“ No, do not alarm yourself,” replied the Queen. “ I asked my nephew to recommend a man whose military reputation might both impress the enemy and satisfy our friends.”

“ And he ?” enquired the King.

“ Is Baron Charles Mack. Have you anything against him ?”

“ Only this,” answered Ferdinand, “ that he let himself be beaten by the French ; but as the Imperial Generals, including your brother Prince Charles, are all in the same boat, we may as well have Mack as another.”

The Queen bit her lips, and rising, said :

“ Then you will accept Baron Mack as Commander-in-Chief ?”

“ Certainly,” said the King.

“ Then, with your permission ”—And she went to the door while the King looked on—mystified. Suddenly, from the Court below rose the sound of a hunting horn vigorously blown, and giving the first notes of the “ lancer ” or starting blast. The very windows shook with the noise ; and King, Ministers and Councillors stared at each other in astonishment. “ What is the fool about ?” exclaimed the King. “ He must know the hunt was postponed.” Then, as the huntsman continued to blow furiously, Ferdinand flung the window open, and exclaimed, “ Stop that, you idiot !” After which he returned to his seat more sullen than ever. But while his back was turned, a new individual had, on the Queen’s invitation, entered the Council Chamber and become a fresh source of surprise to the assembly. This newcomer was a man of about forty-five, tall, fair, and pale, wearing the uniform of an Austrian General and the Orders of Maria Theresa and Saint Januarius.

“ Sire,” said the Queen, “ I have the honour to present the Baron Charles Mack, whom you have just named Commander-in-Chief of your armies.”

“ Ah ! General,” said the King, gazing with some

surprise at the Order of St. Januarius, which he had no recollection of having bestowed on Mack. "I am charmed to make your acquaintance."

And he exchanged a meaning glance with Ruffo. The Queen intervened :

"Sire," she said, "I thought we ought not to await the Baron's arrival here before giving him some sign of your consideration, and before he left Vienna, I desired your Ambassador to transmit to him the insignia of your Order of St. Januarius."

"And, sire," said the Baron with an outburst of theatrical enthusiasm, "overflowing with gratitude, I have hastened hither with the speed of lightning in order to say, 'Sire, my sword is yours.'" And he drew the weapon with a formidable flourish, whereat Ferdinand, who, like James I., was not fond of cold steel, pushed his chair some paces back. Mack continued :

"I draw this sword for you and Her Majesty the Queen, nor shall it be sheathed until it has overthrown this infamous French Republic, which is the negation of Humanity and a disgrace to Europe. Will you accept my oath, sire?"

Ferdinand's sound sense estimated Mack's boasting at its proper value. With a mocking smile he murmured in Neapolitan patois, "Ceuzza," a word unintelligible to anyone not born at the foot of Vesuvius. It is quite untranslatable but may be said to mean something between "coxcomb" and "idiot." Mack, naturally, did not understand, and not knowing whether the King accepted his oath or not, turned in embarrassment towards the Queen.

"His Majesty," said the Queen with perfect gravity, "has expressed his gratitude to you, General, by a single and most expressive word."

Mack bowed, and put up his sword with much solemnity.

"Now," said the King, with the quiet mockery which delighted him so much, "I hope my dear nephew, besides sending me one of his best Generals to over-

throw the infamous French Republic, has also sent me a plan of campaign revised by the Aulic Council."

The Aulic Council, be it remembered, had drawn up the plans of campaign for '96 and '97, which had resulted in the Austrian Generals and the Archduke Charles being gloriously beaten. Ferdinand's question was put with an engaging simplicity.

"No, sire," said Mack. "My august master has graciously given me *carte blanche* on this subject."

"Then you will consider it at once, will you not, General? I own I am quite impatient to hear your plan explained."

"It is already decided on," said Mack, with an air of absolute self-satisfaction.

"Ah!" said Ferdinand, recovering his good temper as soon as he found someone to deride, "you hear, gentlemen. Actually before Citizen Garat declared war on us in the name of the infamous French Republic, the infamous French Republic, thanks to the genius of our Commander-in-Chief, was already beaten! Most certainly we are under the protection of God and Saint Januarius. Thanks, my dear General, thanks!"

Mack, swelling with pride at what he took for a genuine compliment, made a deep obeisance.

"It's a pity," continued Ferdinand, "that we have not here a map of our kingdom and the States of the Church, so that we could follow the General's movements. Citizen Bonaparte, we are told, has a large map in his study on which he points out beforehand the exact places where he will beat the Austrian Generals; the Baron could have shewn us those where he will beat the French Generals. We must have a similar map made for the use of Baron Mack. Do you hear, Ariola?"

"Unnecessary, sire," said Mack. "I have an excellent one."

"Is it as good as the Citizen Bonaparte's?" demanded the King.

"I think so," said Mack with perfect satisfaction.

"Then let us have it at once, General," cried the

King. "I am dying to see a map on which one beats one's enemy beforehand."

Mack requested that his portfolio might be brought from an adjoining room. The Queen, who perfectly understood her husband's veiled mockery, and was afraid lest Mack might discover that he was merely serving as a butt for the King's caustic humour, suggested that this was hardly the time for details; but Mack, unwilling to lose the chance of displaying his military science before the various Generals present, respectfully persisted, and a large portfolio was brought, bearing the Austrian arms on one side, and its owner's name and titles on the other. Mack drew out a large map of the States of the Church, and spread it on the table.

"Now, my Minister of War! Now Generals!" said the King, "your best attention, please! Do not lose a word of what the Baron has to tell you. Now, Baron, we are listening."

The officers approached the table with much curiosity, for, at that time, Mack enjoyed the reputation—why, no one knew, either then or now—of being one of the first strategists in Europe. The Queen, however, thinking more raillery was intended, drew back a little.

"What! madame," said the King, "do you withdraw just when the Baron is going to shew us where he will beat those Republicans you detest so much."

"I do not understand strategy, sire," replied the Queen sharply, "and," indicating Ruffo, "perhaps I had better make room for someone who does." And she went to a window and idly tapped the glass with her fingers. At that moment, as if in answer to a signal, a second hunting blast was heard from below, only this time, instead of the "lancer," it sounded the "view."

The King stopped short as if rooted to the ground, his expression changed from good-humour to one of anger. "Really!" he exclaimed, "either they are mad themselves or they want to make me so. How can we hunt either stag or wild boar, when we are hunting Republicans!"

He rushed to the window and flung it violently open.

"Will you be silent, you double-dyed idiot!" he cried, "do you want me to come down and kill you with my own hands?"

"Oh! sire," said Mack, "it would really be doing the rascal too much honour!"

"Do you think so, Baron?" said Ferdinand, recovering his temper. "Well, then, we will let him live, and kill the French instead. Let us have your plan, General."

And he shut the window more quietly than might have been expected from the exasperation caused by the sound of the horn. Mack's little bit of commonplace flattery happily saved the situation.

"You see, gentleman," said Mack in the manner of a professor lecturing his class, "our 60,000 men are divided into four or five points on this line between Gaeta and Aquila."

"There are 65,000," said the King, "no need to stint yourself."

"I only want the 60,000," said Mack, "my calculations are based on that number. If you had 100,000 I should not want one more. Besides, I have exact information as to the French, they have barely 10,000 men."

"Then," said the King, "we are six to one, which is comforting. We were only two to one in the campaign of '96 and '97 when Bonaparte beat my nephew's forces so completely."

"But I was not there, sire," remarked Mack with a self-satisfied smile.

"True," replied the King with the utmost innocence, "there were only Beaulieu, Wurmser, Alvinzi and the Archduke Charles."

"Sire, sire!" murmured the Queen, pulling Ferdinand's hunting-coat as she spoke.

"Don't alarm yourself," answered the King aside. "I understand the man, and will only scratch when he invites it."

"I was saying," resumed Mack, "that our largest

body of troops, about 20,000 is at San Germano, and the 40,000 others are encamped on the Tronto, at Sessa, at Tagliacozzo and at Aquila. Ten thousand men will cross the Tronto and turn the French garrison out of Ascoli, then advance upon Fermo by the Emilian Way. Four thousand others leave Aquila, occupy Rieti, and march towards Terni. Five or six thousand proceed from Tagliacozzo to Tivoli and over-run the Sabini district. Eight thousand more leave the camp at Sessa and enter the Roman territory by the Appian Way. Six thousand go by sea to Leghorn and cut off the French who are retreating by way of Perugia——”

“Who retreat by Perugia! Our General, unlike Citizen Bonaparte, does not say precisely where he will beat the enemy, but he tells us by which way they will retreat.”

“Oh! yes!” said Mack triumphantly, “I do tell you where I shall beat the enemy.”

“Come, now, let us see that,” said the King, seemingly as much interested in the war as if it had been a hunt.

“I leave San Germano with Your Majesty and twenty or twenty-five thousand men——”

“What? You leave San Germano with me!”

“I march upon Rome——”

“Still with me!”

“I reach it by way of Ceperano and Frosinone——”

“Very bad roads, General! I know them, I have been upset there!”

“The enemy abandons Rome——”

“Does he?”

“Rome is a place which cannot be defended.”

“Well, when the enemy abandons Rome, what does he do next?”

“He will retire upon Civita-Castellana, a formidable position.”

“Ah! And you naturally leave him there?”

“Oh! no! I attack him and beat him.”

“Excellent! But if you do not beat him—by accident?”

"Sire," said Mack, putting his hand on his breast and bowing low, "when I have the honour to tell Your Majesty I shall beat the enemy, Your Majesty may consider that he is beaten."

"Then that is settled," said the King.

"Has Your Majesty any objections to make to my arrangements?"

"No, there is only one point about which we must agree. You said you would leave San Germano along with me?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well, this is the very first I have heard about it. What rank do you offer me in my own army? I hope the question is not indiscreet?"

"Naturally the supreme command, sire. I shall be proud and happy to obey Your Majesty's orders."

"The supreme command! Hum."

"Your Majesty will not refuse? Her Majesty the Queen gave me hopes——"

"Her Majesty the Queen is extremely kind. She has always cherished too good an opinion of me and shews it now, but she unfortunately forgets that I am no soldier. In Supreme Command!! Did San Nicandro bring me up to be an Alexander or a Hannibal? Have I studied at the School of Brienne like the Citizen Bonaparte? Have I read Polybius, or Cæsar, or Marshal Saxe like the Archduke Charles? or indeed anything else one ought to read in order to get beaten according to rule? And have I ever commanded anything except my Lipariotes?"

"Sire," replied Mack, "a descendant of Henri IV., and a grandson of Louis XIV. knows all that without having learnt it."

"My good General," said the King, "you can tell those whoppers to fools if you like, but not to mere asses like myself."

"Sire!" exclaimed Mack, much astonished at the King's frank pronouncement on himself.

Ferdinand continued :

"One of the first qualities of a General is to be brave, is it not?"

"Most indisputably, sire."

"Well, then, you are brave, I suppose."

"Sire!"

"You are quite sure you are brave, are you not?"

"Oh! sire!"

"I am not at all sure that I am brave, however."

The Queen blushed up to her ears, Mack stared, and the Ministers and Councillors smiled. Well acquainted with the King's cynicism, nothing that he said could astonish them.

"After all," resumed the King, "perhaps I am mistaken. I may be brave without knowing it. We shall see."

Turning towards his Councillors, "Gentlemen," said Ferdinand, "you have heard the General's plan of campaign. Do you all, without exception, fully approve?"

All signified that they did.

"And you, Ruffo?" asked the King turning towards the Cardinal, who had remained a little apart from the rest.

But Ruffo remained silent.

Mack had acknowledged the general approval with a smile, he now looked with wonder at this ecclesiastic who presumed to differ from the rest.

"Perhaps the Cardinal is prepared with a better plan," said the Queen.

"No, Your Majesty," answered Ruffo quietly, "I did not know war was so imminent, and no one honoured me by asking my opinion."

"If Your Eminence has any observations to make," said Mack jeeringly, "I am ready to listen."

"I should not have presumed to offer my opinion without Your Excellency's permission," said the Cardinal with extreme courtesy. "But since Your Excellency allows me——"

"Oh! yes, yes, Eminence," said Mack, laughing.

"If I rightly understand Your Excellency's com-

binations, the object proposed in the plan you have done us the honour to lay before us."

"Yes, what is my object?" said Mack, thinking he had got someone to ridicule in his turn.

"Let us see," said Ferdinand, who upheld the Cardinal for the simple reason that the Queen detested him.

"Your Excellency is extending your line in the hope that, owing to your great numerical superiority, you will be able to turn the ends of the French line, surround their troops, drive the different masses one upon another, throw them into confusion, and as they cannot retreat through Tuscany, either destroy, or force them to surrender."

"Your Eminence could not have put it more clearly if I had explained it all beforehand," said Mack, delighted. "As sure as I am Baron Charles Mack, they will be taken prisoner to the very last man, and not one will return to France to tell the tale. Have you anything better to propose?"

"If I had been asked," said the Cardinal, "I should have proposed another arrangement."

"And it would have been——?"

"To divide the army into three parts only. I would concentrate 25,000 or 30,000 men between Cieti and Terni. I would send 12,000 on the Emilian Way to meet the French left wing, and 10,000 into the Pontine Marshes to crush their right wing. I would also send 8,000 into Tuscany. I would use my utmost efforts to break down the enemy's centre, and to turn the flank of his two wings, and to prevent their giving help to one another. Meanwhile, the Tuscan legion, having collected all the country could provide, should be on the watch to join hands with us and help us according to circumstances. This would allow our troops, which are young and inexperienced, to act in masses, and would have given them self-confidence. But I am only a poor Churchman, and I bow before General Mack's genius and experience."

And the Cardinal, who had approached the table in

order to demonstrate his ideas upon the map, stepped backward, as if abandoning the discussion. The Generals looked at each other in surprise for it was evident that Ruffo's advice was good. Mack, by scattering the Neapolitan army and dividing it into small bodies, ran the risk of these being beaten separately even by a much inferior force, a danger which Ruffo's plan would have averted. Mack bit his lips, for he felt that the Cardinal's strategy was better than his own.

"Eminence," said Mack, "the King must choose between you and me. Possibly," he added with a forced smile, "Peter the Hermit is more suitable than Godfrey de Bouillon for what may be called a Holy War."

The King had only vague ideas as to the identity of the persons mentioned, but although he ridiculed Mack he did not wish to quarrel with him.

"What are you talking about, General?" he exclaimed. "I am sure your plan is excellent, and as you see, these gentlemen all approve of it. So do I, and we will not change a single movement. There is the army—good! There is the Commander-in-Chief—good, very good! Now we only want money. Come, Corradino, Ariola has shewn us his men, you must produce the money."

"Eh! sire," answered the unlucky Minister thus suddenly attacked. "Your Majesty knows that the expense of fitting out the army and clothing it has completely emptied your Exchequer."

"Bad news, Corradino, very bad! I have always heard that money is the sinews of war. Do you hear, madame? We have no money!"

"Sire," replied the Queen, "the money is forthcoming as well as the army and the General. For the moment there is a million pounds sterling at your disposal."

"Good again!" said the King, "and pray who is the alchemist who has the inestimable power of producing gold?"

"I shall have the honour of presenting him to you, sire," said the Queen, going to the door by which Mack

had entered. "Will Your Grace," she said to someone as yet invisible, "have the kindness to confirm what I have just told the King, namely, that money to enable us to make war on the Jacobins will not be wanting."

All eyes turned towards the door, on the threshold of which appeared Nelson, radiantly happy from the first kiss, with which his devotion and the subsidies of England had just been purchased by Emma Hamilton. The evil genius of France came in person to sit at the Council Board and support Caroline's lying treason with the full weight of English gold.

Nelson's appearance was familiar to all except Mack. The Queen took the latter's hand and leading the future victor of Civita Castellana to the victor of Aboukir.

"Let me present," said she, "the Hero of the Land to the Hero of the Sea."

Nelson did not seem exactly flattered by the compliment, but being in a happy frame of mind, he bowed courteously to Mack, and turning to the King, said:

"Sire, I am fortunate in being able to announce to Your Majesty and your Ministers that my Government has invested me with full powers to treat with you on any questions relative to war with France."

The King felt that he was caught, and as completely tied hand and foot as was Gulliver at Lilliput. However, he made the only objection which remained to him:

"Your Grace has heard," he said, "the subject under discussion. Our Minister of Finance has just frankly informed us that our Exchequer is, unfortunately, empty, and I observed that, being destitute of money, war is quite impossible."

"And, as usual, Your Majesty displayed an excellent wisdom," replied Nelson, "but Mr. Pitt has fortunately invested me with powers to remedy this difficulty."

And he laid on the table a warrant drawn up as follows:

"On arriving at Naples, Admiral Nelson, Baron Nelson of the Nile, is authorized to make arrange-

ments with Sir William Hamilton, our Ambassador at the Court of the Two Sicilies, for the support of our august ally, the King of Naples, in any expenses incurred in sustaining a war against the French Republic.

“ W. PITT,

“ London, September 7, 1798.”

“ Your Majesty should also be informed,” said the Queen, “ that the French are in no position to make war at present.”

“ They have declared it, notwithstanding,” replied Ferdinand.

The Queen smiled scornfully.

“ The Citizen Garat was in too great a hurry,” she said. “ He would have waited a little had he known the position of General Championnet at Rome.”

“ And you know this situation better than did the Citizen Garat; madame. Are you in correspondence with the General’s staff?”

“ I do not trust to correspondence with foreigners, sire.”

“ Then did you get your information from Championnet himself?”

“ Precisely. The French Ambassador should have received this letter this morning had he not been in such a desperate hurry to leave yesterday evening.”

And the Queen took out of its envelope the letter which Pasquale di Simone had brought to her in the Dark Chamber, and handed it to the King.

“ It is written in French!” said Ferdinand, much as he might have said, “ It is written in Hebrew!” and, handing it to Ruffo,

“ Eminence,” he said, “ be good enough to read this letter in Italian.”

Ruffo took the letter and, in the midst of a profound silence, read as follows :

“ Citizen Ambassador.

“ I have now been at Rome a short time only and I think it my duty to inform you of the state in which I find

the army I am called on to command in order that you may decide on your course of conduct towards a treacherous Court, which, egged on by our eternal enemy, England, only awaits a favourable moment for declaring war upon us."

The Queen looked at Nelson, and both smiled. Nelson understood neither French nor Italian, but the letter had probably been translated to him beforehand. The Cardinal continued :

"To begin with, this army, which on paper consists of 35,000 men, is really composed of 8,000 only. The men are in want of clothes, boots and provisions, and have not received a farthing of pay for the last three months. Of cartridges we have only 180,000, everywhere we are short of powder, and at Civita Vecchia the other day we could not even fire on a Barbary Corsair which came to reconnoitre the coast."

"You hear that, sire?" said the Queen.

"I hear," said the King. "Continue, Eminence."

"Our fortresses are no better than the arsenals. The cannon balls do not fit the cannon in any one of them. In some there are balls and no cannon, in others cannon and no balls. And as to artillery we have only 5 cannon and a park of four pieces. This disastrous condition of affairs explains the instructions I received from the Directory which I now hand on for your guidance."

"I am to repel by force of arms any hostile attack on the Roman Republic, and carry the war into the Neapolitan territory, but only if the King of Naples carries out his long threatened projects of invasion."

"You hear that, sire?" said the Queen, "I think we have not much to fear from an army of 8,000 men, provided with five pieces of cannon and 180,000 cartridges."

"Will you continue, Cardinal," said the King, rubbing his hands.

"Yes, continue," said the Queen, "let us hear what the General himself thinks of his position."

“ Now,”

continued the Cardinal,

“ you will easily understand, Citizen Ambassador, that with the means at my command I can hardly repel a hostile attack, much less carry the war into the enemy’s country.”

“ Does that re-assure you, sire ?” enquired the Queen.
“ Hum !” said Ferdinand, “ let us hear the rest.”

“ I cannot insist too strongly, Citizen Ambassador, on the necessity, as far as the dignity of France will permit, of maintaining harmonious relations between the Republic and the Court of the Two Sicilies, and of restraining the impatience of the Neapolitan patriots as much as possible. Any movement undertaken within the next three months, that is to say, before I have had time to re-organize my troops, would be premature and doomed to failure.

“ My aide-de-camp is charged to bring you this letter and to interview the Chiefs of the Republican party at Naples. He is most reliable and of distinguished courage, and having been born in Neapolitan territory, speaks not only Italian but also the dialect of Naples. Kindly send him back as quickly as possible with a full explanation of your position with regard to the Court of the Two Sicilies.

“ Fraternity,

“ CHAMPIONNET.

“ September 18, 1798.”

“ Well, sire,” said the Queen, “ are you not now completely reassured ?”

“ On one point, yes, madame ; on another, no.”

“ Oh ! I understand, you are thinking of the Republican party in whose existence you refused to believe. Well, it is no phantom, but really exists, since it has to be restrained on the advice of the Jacobins themselves.”

“ How the devil did you obtain this letter ?” asked the King, taking it from the Cardinal and turning it over curiously.

“ That is my secret,” answered the Queen, “ and I

must ask to be allowed to keep it. But Your Majesty is looking at Lord Nelson."

"I was going to say that September and October are stormy months and that it might well be a month or six weeks before this money we need so much could arrive from England."

Nelson replied :

"The case, sire, has been foreseen and provided for. Messrs. Baker and Son, with the help of their various correspondents, will cash a cheque for one million sterling, which Sir William Hamilton will draw upon them and which I will endorse. It is only necessary, as the sum is a large one, for Your Majesty to give them sufficient notice."

"Good, very good!" said the King, "Sir William writes the cheque, you endorse it, then it is given to me, and I settle with the Bakers."

Ruffo whispered something to the King. Ferdinand continued,

"But I am well aware that our kind ally, however friendly she may be, is not going to give us all that for nothing. What does England want in return for her £1,000,000 sterling?"

"Only a small concession which will not affect Your Majesty in the least."

"And what may that be?"

"England desires that when Malta, now blockaded by the fleet of His Britannic Majesty, shall have been retaken from the French, Your Majesty shall consent to renounce your rights to this island, in order that England, which has no Mediterranean possession except Gibraltar, may make Malta a station of call and supply for the English fleet."

"Good. It would be an easy cession on my side. Malta belongs to the knights and not to me."

"True, sire, but when Malta is retaken the Order will be dissolved," said Nelson.

"And, if the Order is dissolved," said Ruffo, "Malta returns to the Two Sicilies. It was given to the knights of Rhodes in 1535 by Charles V. as heir to the crown of

Aragon. If England has so much need of a Mediterranean station Malta is cheap at £1,000,000 sterling."

Possibly there would have been a further discussion on this point had not a third hunting-blast been heard in the Court below, which produced as great an effect as the two previous ones had done.

The Queen glanced knowingly at Mack and Nelson. The King rushed to the window and flung it open again. The horn this time was sounding the "hallali."

"Will anyone tell me," he cried furiously, "what is meant by sounding these abominable hunting-calls?"

"They mean that Your Majesty can start when you like," answered the huntsman. "You will not be disappointed, the boars have been turned."

"Turned," repeated the King, "the boars have been turned!"

"Yes, sire, there are fifteen of them!"

"Fifteen boars! Do you hear, madame?" cried the King. "Do you hear gentlemen? Fifteen boars! Dost hear, Jupiter? Fifteen! Fifteen! Fifteen!"

Then returning to the huntsman,

"Wretched man!" he cried in an agonized voice, "do you not know there can be no hunt to-day!"

On this the Queen came forward. "Why can there be no hunt to-day, sire?" she enquired with her most bewitching smile.

"Because, madame, when I received your note last night I put it off," said the King, turning to Ruffo as if asking his testimony.

"I do not doubt it, sire," replied the Queen, "but I knew it would disappoint you to do so, and as I thought the Council would finish early and there might still be time for your hunt, I intercepted your messenger and let the first order stand; only saying you would start at eleven instead of nine. It is striking eleven now, the Council is over, the boars are there, there is nothing to interfere with Your Majesty's pleasure!"

Ferdinand's countenance cleared as the Queen spoke, and ended by becoming radiant.

"Ah! chère maîtresse!" he cried, "you are fit not

only to take Acton's place as Prime Minister, you might take the Duke de Salandra's as well and be Grand Huntsman. You are right, the Council is over, you have your General on land and your Admiral on sea, we have got five or six million ducats we did not expect to get, and all you do is well done. I only ask you not to begin your campaign before the Emperor begins also. Upon my word, I feel quite ready for war, perhaps I am really brave, after all. *Au revoir, chère maîtresse!* *Au revoir, gentlemen!* *Au revoir, Ruffo!*"

"What about Malta, sire?" asked the Cardinal.

"Oh! let them do what they like about Malta; I have done extremely well without Malta for two hundred and sixty-three years. I can continue to do without a good-for-nothing rock where one can only shoot twice a year when the quails fly over it. Where one cannot have pheasants because there is no water, where you cannot even grow a radish, but must fetch everything from Sicily! Let them take Malta and take the Jacobins as well. I ask no more. Fifteen boars! Jupiter, tally ho! tally ho, Jupiter!"

And the King departed, whistling a fourth hunting call.

"My lord," said the Queen, addressing Nelson, "you can inform your Government that the King of the Two Sicilies has no objection to the cession of Malta."

Turning to the assembled Councillors:

"Gentlemen," said she, "the King thanks you for the good advice you have given. The sitting is ended."

And, including everyone in a sweeping bow, accompanied by an ironical glance at Ruffo, the Queen retired to her apartments followed by Mack and Nelson.

CHAPTER VI

LUISA AND SALVATO

AFTER Salvato had left the Palace of Queen Joanna, the remaining conspirators divided themselves into parties of three each—Nicolino, Velasco and Schipani climbing the hill towards Pausilippo, while Cirillo, Hector and Manthonnet availed themselves of the latter's boat, which had remained safely moored under shelter of the palace, to cross the bay towards Portici. On the way they landed Cirillo at Mergellina, the nearest point to his home. He proceeded upward and reached the road near the Palm Tree without encountering any obstacle. But once in the road he observed a group of men in front of him apparently examining two others lying prostrate on the ground. By the light of the torches they carried Cirillo quickly recognized them as a night patrol in the exercise of their duties. They were, in fact, the same patrol whose coming had alarmed Pasquale and had caused him to decamp, leaving killed and wounded on the ground. Two of the latter had contrived to drag themselves away, and of the two remaining one was quite dead, the other still breathing, and the officer ordered him to be carried to the nearest house. Cirillo, remembering that Salvato would have had to pass this way, began to fear that something untoward might have happened and followed the patrol. Arrived at a small house they demanded admittance which was refused until the officer threatened to break the door down unless it were at once opened. Hearing the soldiers enquiring for a surgeon, Cirillo came forward.

"I am not a surgeon," said he, "but a physician. Probably I can do all that is necessary here." And he ordered the man to be carried in and laid carefully on the table on a mattress.

"Ah! doctor," said the wounded man, "I am not a patient that will do you credit. I have experience in wounds."

Signing to Cirillo to bend over him, he whispered:

"You would do well to send for a priest."

Seeing two children in the room, Cirillo desired the eldest to let the priest know he was required, and also to wake the chemist and get a prescription made up. Very little examination told him that the wound was mortal, and the sufferer completely paralysed. He cleansed and bound up the wound and administered a cordial. The officer then came forward. "Are you able to answer my questions?" he enquired.

"Your questions? What for?"

"I must draw up my report," said the officer.

"Ah! your report. I can give it you in four words. Another spoonful of your cordial, doctor."

It was administered, and the patient continued:

"There were six of us. We lay in wait to assassinate a young man. He killed one of us and wounded three. I am one of the three. That is all."

Cirillo's doubts as to Salvato's concern in the affair were solved. Who else was likely to have accounted for four men out of six?"

"The names of your companions?" demanded the officer.

The wounded man grinned.

"Ah!" he said, "you would like to know them, would you not? I can tell you someone who knows them if you like to ask him."

"Who is that?"

"Pasquale di Simone. Would you like his address?"

"The Queen's cut-throat!" murmured the listeners under their breath.

"Thanks, my friend," replied the officer, "I think

that is all I want. Come, men," he said, "let us get on. We are only wasting time here."

As the sound of their footsteps died away Cirillo approached the sufferer. "My friend," he said, "I think you will not refuse to give me some information which will harm no one and is of great consequence to me. This young man you speak of was a French officer?"

"It seems so."

"Was he killed?"

"I cannot say; but I am quite sure that if not dead he must be very near it."

"Did you see him fall?"

"Yes, but not clearly. I was on the ground and thinking most about myself."

"Try and tell me what you did see. I am most anxious to know what happened to this young man."

"I saw that he fell against the garden door of the House of the Palm Tree, and then, as in a mist, I thought the door opened and someone dressed in white drew him inside. But it might be only a vision, and the figure in white was perhaps the Angel of Death come for his soul."

"Thank you, friend, I now know all I want to know, and I hear——"

"Yes, the priest and his bell. One hears it a long way off when he comes for oneself. It is all over with me, is it not?"

"You have borne pain as a brave man should, and I answer accordingly. You have time to make your peace with God and that is all."

The priest, bearing the Viaticum, entered with his acolytes. All present fell on their knees, Cirillo's work was done and he quietly left the house and retraced his steps as far as the garden door of San Felice's house. He examined the door carefully and satisfied himself that there were traces of blood on it.

"Salvato is here without doubt," he murmured to himself. "Is he dead or alive? I must find out as quickly as possible."

At nine o'clock the next morning San Felice as usual entered his dining-room expecting to find Luisa occupied with the breakfast arrangements. To his astonishment she did not appear and the only information he could extract from Nina was: "Madame is still asleep and did not wish to be disturbed."

Luisa invariably rose at seven. And the Chevalier, much disturbed at her non-appearance, walked anxiously up and down for some time. He was on the point of going to her door himself when she entered the room looking tired and pale, but more lovely than ever. Luisa was exquisitely fair, but with large dark eyes and long dark lashes. Her features and form were beautifully modelled and there was something almost angelic in her smile, mien and beauty. The Chevalier kissed her white forehead, remarking in the mythological language then fashionable:

"If Aurora has kept her old Tithonus waiting, it must have been because she wanted time to disguise herself as Venus."

"I had terrible dreams last night," said Luisa, blushing, "and I do not feel well in consequence."

"And have these terrible dreams spoiled your appetite as well as your sleep?"

"I am afraid so," said Luisa, seating herself and trying to eat. But she found it impossible, and felt herself getting alternately red and white under San Felice's anxious and enquiring looks. To her great relief someone knocked at the garden door and she rose hastily to go and open it.

"Where is Nina?" asked the Chevalier.

"I do not know, she has gone out perhaps. I had better answer the door."

"Nina out at this time, and when you are not well. Impossible! But stay where you are, I will go."

Presently San Felice returned, bringing Cirillo with him. Luisa breathed again; Cirillo and she were great friends, partly because the doctor had attended Prince Caramanico and often spoke of him, although entirely ignorant of his relationship to Luisa. During the last

night she had been continually on the point of sending for him but did not dare to do so. She wondered now what he would think of the whole affair, and still more what curious chance had brought him on this particular morning at so unusual an hour.

"Well," said San Felice, putting his hand on the doctor's knee, "is this early visit by way of excuse for your previous neglect? We might die twenty times over without knowing whether you yourself were dead or alive."

Cirillo studied the looks of his friends carefully. One shewed evident signs of an anxious and disturbed night, the other appeared full of serene happiness. "Then," he said with emphasis, "you are glad to see me *this* morning, dear sir?"

"I am always glad to see you, dear doctor, morning, noon or night; but certainly I am particularly glad to see you to-day."

"And why? Tell me."

"For two reasons—but drink your coffee—Ah, yes, you are unlucky, Luisa did not make it this morning. Imagine what time she appeared. No wonder she blushes! Not till after nine o'clock!"

Cirillo noted Luisa's changing colour, and had compassion. "But what is your other reason?" he enquired.

"Only think, I brought from the palace yesterday Buffon's 'Epochs of Nature.' The Prince has got it secretly, because it is on the censor's list—I don't know why, perhaps because it does not entirely agree with the Bible."

"I should not mind that," said Cirillo smiling, "provided only that it agrees with common sense."

"Well, that was the least important of my reasons, so I have said most about it. The other is before your eyes. What think you of the countenance opposite?"

"Why, that it is always a charming countenance, but to-day seems a little tired. Perhaps madame was frightened last night?"

"Frightened? Why?" enquired San Felice.

"Did nothing happen to alarm you last night, madame?" asked Cirillo.

"No, nothing at all," said Luisa, with an imploring glance.

"Then," said Cirillo, carelessly, "I conclude you had only a bad night."

"Yes!" said her husband laughing; "she had terrible dreams, and yet when I came home from the Embassy she was sound asleep. I went into her room and kissed her, and she never awoke!"

"At what time was that?"

"About half-past two."

"That explains it," said Cirillo; "it was all over by then."

"But what was all over?"

"Only this," said Cirillo. "A man was assassinated at your gate last night, but as you did not come home till late, and madame was asleep, I conclude you have heard nothing."

"No. This is the first I hear of it. Unfortunately, assassinations are not uncommon in Naples, particularly here. Mergellina is badly lighted, and the people go to bed at nine. Ah! so that is why you pay us an early visit."

"Just so. This was not quite a common-place murder, and as it happened under your windows, I thought I should like to know if it had caused any trouble here."

"No—as you see. But how do you know about it?"

"I must have passed your door just after it happened. The man—he must have been both brave and strong—had killed two of the police and wounded two others."

"What!" said San Felice, lowering his voice, "did the assassins belong to the police?"

"They were led by Pasquale di Simone," answered Cirillo, also in a whisper.

"Do you believe all these scandals?" asked San Felice.

"Unfortunately, I am compelled to believe them. Look, do you see that bier at the door of a house beyond

the fountain? It is for the wounded man who died there. I did what I could for him, and he told me all."

Luisa understood that Cirillo's words were intended for her. She clasped her hands in great agitation. Cirillo gave her a reassuring glance, and continued:

"I am only too thankful that neither you nor Madame heard anything of this. But as I see madame does not look well, I should like to ask her a few questions, and as sometimes we are obliged to touch on delicate subjects, perhaps you will allow us to go into another room."

"Oh! quite unnecessary, doctor. I am twenty minutes late as it is. I must be off to my library. You can talk to Luisa as much as you will. Adieu, my dear child; tell the doctor anything he wants to know, and remember you are the joy of my life. Good heavens! it is a quarter past ten already!" And he bestowed a hasty kiss on Luisa, caught up his hat and umbrella and hastened away. Cirillo did not wait to see him leave the garden. Turning to Luisa:

"He is here, is he not?" he asked in a tone of great anxiety.

"Yes, yes," she answered, sinking on her knees before him.

"Dead or alive?"

"He is alive."

"Heaven be praised," cried Cirillo. "But you, Luisa——"

"But what of me?" she asked, trembling.

"May you be for ever blessed!" exclaimed Cirillo, raising and embracing her. And he threw himself into a chair, in his turn overcome by emotion. Luisa only understood that she had saved the life of someone dear to her friend, but she poured out a glass of water and brought it him. Cirillo drank and recovered himself. "Now," he said, springing up, "let us lose no time. Where is he?"

"There," said Luisa, pointing down the corridor, and as Cirillo moved towards it, "Wait," she said, "and listen to me; there is something you must hear first."

"I am listening," said Cirillo, smiling; "he is not at the last gasp, is he?"

"No, thank heaven! I even believe he is as well as he can be. But hear me," she said in her sweet voice, placing her hands on his shoulders, "I did not dare to send for you because you are my husband's friend, and I felt sure that he ought not to know this. Neither did I dare to trust an important secret to a doctor I did not know, for there is a secret behind all this, is there not?"

"You are right; there is a terrible secret."

"And a royal one too, is it not?"

"Hush! Who told you that?"

"Michael, my foster-brother, was here, and recognised Pasquale di Simone. But what I also wanted to say was that, not daring to send for a doctor, I allowed an old woman who chanced to be here to do what she could.

"Has she any medical knowledge?" asked Cirillo.

"She professes to be able to treat wounds. My foster-brother—'Mad Michael' the people call him——"

"You must be careful," interrupted Cirillo; "he is a furious Royalist, whose only idea is to slaughter Jacobins."

"Yes, but he would never betray a secret in which I was concerned."

"That is possible. Our lazzaroni are a strange mixture of good and evil, only the evil comes uppermost in most of them. But you were saying——"

"Michael had brought an Albanian gipsy here, to tell my fortune. I assure you it was his idea, not mine. She told me all sorts of foolish things, and as she was here when this trouble occurred, she used herbs to stop the bleeding and put on a dressing."

"You are sure she bore no ill-will to the young man?" asked Cirillo anxiously. "She might have used something poisonous."

"Oh no! She did not know him, and seemed much interested in the case. He is terribly weak, but seemed relieved when the dressing was put on."

"These women," said Cirillo as if speaking to him-

self, "sometimes have wonderful knowledge, and medical science owes a good deal to them. Only, Luisa," he added, "they are often dangerously jealous, and she might do harm if she thought another doctor interfered. Try to get her out of the way while I see the wounded man."

"That is just what I feared," said Lusia, "but now you know, I will leave you in another room and find some excuse for sending Nanno away. Come then."

She led the way through a long suite of apartments, and came to the door leading into the adjoining house.

"Ah!" exclaimed Cirillo, "this is excellent. I understand now. He is not in your house at all, but in the Duchess Fusco's. It is most providential."

"And," said Luisa, "he must be hidden?—"

"From everybody without exception. His presence in this house, even though it is not yours, would, if known, compromise your husband most fatally."

"Ah!" cried Luisa joyfully; "then I was right in keeping all this a complete secret?"

"Quite right, and I will only add to reassure you that if this young man were discovered and arrested it would be a question, not only of his life, but of yours, your husband's, mine, and of many other lives much more valuable than mine."

"No one's life could be more valuable than yours, doctor. Here we are at the door. Will you remain here and I ~~will go~~ in?"

Cirillo stood aside, and Luisa entered noiselessly. To her surprise only Nina was there, who was applying the juice of Nanno's herbs to the wound by means of a small sponge. She explained that Nanno had said all was going well, and that she could do no more and had business elsewhere, and that Michael, anticipating disturbances in the Old Market, where he was a person of consequence, had likewise departed.

"Come in, doctor," said Luisa, "the field is quite clear."

Cirillo entered. The wounded man was lying on a bed with his chest uncovered except for the dressing

which was kept in its place over the wound by a linen bandage taken crosswise over the shoulders, and was continually moistened by the sponge which Nina held. Salvato, hearing Luisa, opened his eyes, and his countenance assumed an expression of happiness which almost effaced that of suffering. He looked doubtfully at Cirillo, then recognising him, murmured his name and held out his hand, then sank back exhausted.

Cirillo signed to him to keep quite still, and carefully examined the dressing and the remains of the pounded herbs, recognising an astringent compound of fumitory, plantain and southernwood.

"This is well," he said to Luisa, "you can continue your old gipsy's preparation. I might not have ordered it myself, but I could have done nothing better." In fact, the wound appeared perfectly healthy and on the way to healing; the pulse, though very weak, was regular. Cirillo listened to the respiration, and seemed to find it satisfactory. "How do you feel, Salvato?" he enquired.

"Very weak, but very comfortable," was the answer. "I think I could remain like this for ever."

"Bravo!" said Cirillo; "the voice is better than I could have hoped. The old woman has done splendidly. I think you can perhaps answer a few questions; they are important. At any other time I would have spared you the exertion, and if Luisa can answer them, you must let her do so."

"Is your name Luisa?" said Salvato. "It was one of my mother's names also. God has granted that she who gave me life and she who has saved it should bear the same name, and I thank Him for it."

"My friend," said Cirillo, "you must be more sparing of your words. I blame myself, as it is, for each word I let you utter. Do not speak at all unless you are obliged. At what time did he recover consciousness?" he continued, addressing Luisa.

"At five o'clock," she answered quickly; "the sun was just rising."

Salvato smiled, the first rays of daylight had shown him Luisa.

"What did you think on finding yourself here in a strange place with unknown persons."

"I thought I was dead, and that one of God's angels had come to take me to Heaven."

Luisa endeavoured to hide behind Cirillo, but Salvato put out his hand so quickly that Cirillo stopped her and made her remain in sight. "He took you for the Angel of Death," he said; "you must prove, on the contrary, that you are the Angel of Life." Luisa sighed and came nearer the bed. Her glance met Salvato's, and henceforward the two pairs of eyes saw only one another.

"Have you any idea as to who your assassins might be?" asked Cirillo.

"I know," said Luisa promptly. "I told you, they were the queen's men."

Salvato assented with a nod.

"And can you guess their motive?"

"They told me themselves," said Salvato, "they wanted the papers I was carrying, which were in the pocket of the coat Nicolino lent me."

"Did they get them?"

"I believe they were taking them when I fainted away."

"May I examine your coat?"

Salvato nodded, but Luisa interposed:

"I will get it if you like," she said, "but I know the pockets are all empty." And answering Cirillo's silent look of surprise, she continued: "The first thing we did was to try to ascertain who our guest was. If he had a mother or sister in Naples, it would have been my duty to let them know at any risk. We found nothing, Nina, did we?"

"There was absolutely nothing, madame."

"What were these papers which are now in your enemy's hands? Do you know the contents, Salvato?"

"There was only one—the letter from General Championnet enjoining the French Ambassador to maintain

as friendly relations between the two States as possible for the reason that he himself was not in a position to make war."

"Did he mention the patriots who were in communication with him?"

"Yes, the Ambassador was asked to calm them down as much as possible."

"Were any names mentioned?"

"No."

"You are quite certain?"

"I am perfectly certain."

Exhausted by the effort of speaking, Salvato turned very pale and closed his eyes. Luisa uttered a cry, thinking he had fainted. Salvato opened his eyes again, and a smile—was it gratitude or love?—lit up his countenance.

"It is nothing, madame," he said; "nothing at all."

"Not another word," said Cirillo, "I know now all I want to know. If it concerned my life only, I would not have let you speak at all, but you know there are others as well, and you will forgive me."

Salvato took the doctor's hand and pressed it so as to prove that his energy had not forsaken him. "Now," said Cirillo, "keep silence and calm yourself; the danger is not as great as I feared it might have been."

"But the General," said the patient, ignoring the orders just given, "the General. He must know what he will have to do."

"The General," said Cirillo, "will receive either a messenger or a message within three days. He will know that you are wounded dangerously though not mortally, that you are safe from the Neapolitan police, that you have a nurse whom you at first took for an angel, and, finally, that every wounded man would like to be in your place, and would only beg his doctor not to get him well too quickly."

Cirillo went to a writing-table and proceeded to write a prescription, which he gave to Nina, telling her to take it at once.

Meanwhile, Salvato felt for Luisa's hand, and clasped

it in his own. She, blushing, allowed it to remain until Cirillo called her to him. In a low voice he said:

“Care for this young man as a sister cares for her brother, nay, more, care as a mother cares for her child. No one, not even San Felice, must know of his presence here. Providence has confided a precious life to your hands, and you will have to account to Providence.”

Luisa hung her head and sighed. Her own heart pleaded for the sufferer quite as tenderly as any words of Cirillo's. “I will come again the day after tomorrow,” continued the doctor. “Do not send for me unless there is something serious; the police are sure to keep an eye on my movements. There is nothing to do but to continue the treatment and avoid all agitation. Remember it is you who are unwell, and you that I come to see.”

“But,” murmured Luisa, “if my husband knew——”

“In that case I will take all the blame,” answered Cirillo.

Luisa breathed more freely. Nina returned with the prescription, and aided Cirillo in placing freshly-bruised herbs on the wound. He replaced the bandage, again advised perfect quiet, and feeling much re-assured, took leave.

That evening Hector Caraffa left Naples in disguise, taking the same mountain paths as before. He reached the frontier in safety, and hastened to Rome in order to inform Championnet of the misfortunes of his aide-de-camp, and to consult as to what measures should be taken.

CHAPTER VII

FRA PACIFICO

MICHAEL'S anticipations were not disappointed; there was indeed a great tumult in the Old Market, that uproarious quarter where Masaniello began his revolution, and where all the commotions which have agitated Naples during the last five hundred years have had their origin, just as all the earthquakes which have shaken Resina, Portici and Torre del Greco have proceeded from Vesuvius.

About six o'clock in the morning of that day the "questing" or collecting brother of the Convent of St. Ephrem was as usual driving his ass before him and descending the long street leading from the convent gate. Both the monk and the ass were in their way remarkable, particularly the monk, who was known to the world as Fra Pacifico. He was a man of about forty years, and six feet in height, muscular and powerful. He wore the brown capuchin robe and hood, and the regulation sandals with wooden soles, which clattered between his feet and the pavement. His head was strictly tonsured, and his waist encircled by the miraculous cord of St. Francis with its three knots, betokening the threefold vow of poverty, chastity and obedience. His beard was black and thick, and his eyes had that terrible expression found in France only in the natives of Nimes and Avignon, and in Italy among the mountaineers of the Abruzzi, descendants of those fierce Samnites whom the Romans conquered with the utmost difficulty, or of the Marsii whom they never conquered at all.

Fra Pacifico had begun life as a sailor, and was then known as Francis Esposito (the Foundling). He was on board the *Minerva*, commanded by Caracciolo, when the expedition to Toulon in aid of the French Royalists took place. When the tables were unexpectedly turned by Bonaparte's capture of the forts and turning their guns on the allied fleets, Caracciolo ordered every stitch of canvas to be set, and Esposito, one of the most active sailors, was sent aloft to get the top-gallant sail spread. He was accomplishing his task satisfactorily when a cannon ball cut away the yard on which he was standing, and left him hanging by his hands to the loose sail above him. He could feel the sail giving way, and had to choose between attempting to swing himself clear of the ship into the sea, or falling on the deck and being killed. He chose the former, first making a vow to his patron saint, St. Francis, that should he escape he would forsake the sea and become a monk. Profiting by the rolling of the vessel, he chose a favourable moment and dropped some sixty feet into the sea, and, as luck would have it, within three yards of a boat which Caracciolo had ordered to be on the look out, and rose to find willing hands and oars extended to help him. He was promptly dragged into the boat and put on board again, but when Caracciolo congratulated him on his escape, he appeared so absent-minded that the admiral enquired what was the matter. Esposito told him of his vow, adding that some great evil would befall him in either this world or the next were he prevented from accomplishing it. Caracciolo promised that on their return to Naples he should be set free to fulfill his vow, but on one condition. The day after he had taken the final vows and become a full-fledged monk, he was to return to the ship, wearing the habit of his order, and again perform the wonderful leap which had saved his life, having a boat and crew again in attendance to pick him up as before. Esposito accepted willingly, declaring himself certain that St. Francis would not hesitate to come to his aid a second time, whereupon the admiral ordered him a double ration of grog, and gave him leave to remain in his hammock

for the next twenty-four hours. Esposito thanked him, swallowed the grog, and went to sleep in the midst of the infernal uproar made by the furious cannonade from the three forts, in consequence of which the allied ships were making for the open sea as fast as they could, aided by the light of the burning arsenal. In spite of the hostile guns and the terrible storm which overtook the fleet as soon as it was clear of the harbour, Caracciolo brought the *Minerva* back to Naples with comparatively small damage, and once there, duly signed the dismissal of Francis Esposito, reminding him again of the condition attached, which the sailor again promised to observe.

On the Feast of St. Francis, October 4th, 1794, Caracciolo, who by that time had completely forgotten Esposito and all about him, was on board his ship, which, fully dressed, was firing salutes in honour of the Prince Royal, whose name-day it was, when the new monk saluted the admiral and reported himself thus :

“ I am here, my admiral. I come to keep my word.”

“ It is the word of a good sailor,” replied Caracciolo.

“ On which side do you mean to leap ?”

“ To larboard, as before. Besides, it is the side to the quay, and one must not disappoint these good people.”

“ Lower a boat there,” cried the admiral, “ to larboard.” And willing to make the scene as imposing as possible, he took his trumpet and ordered :

“ Man the yards.”

In an instant two hundred sailors were seen climbing upward like so many monkeys, while the marines quickly fell into battle array on the deck facing the harbour. The spectators on shore clapped their hands, waved their handkerchiefs, and shouted : “ Long live St. Francis ; long live Caracciolo,” while twelve boats manned by the monks drew up in a long semi-circle beyond the *Minerva*.

Caracciolo glanced at his former sailor, and said :

“ Have you anything to ask in case things go badly ? ”

“ I would ask your excellency to have a mass said for

the repose of my soul. The monks have promised me hundreds, but I know them! Once dead, not one would hold out a finger to help me out of Purgatory."

"I will have not one, but ten, said for you."

"Thanks, my admiral. I am ready."

"Attention!" cried Caracciolo in a voice which re-echoed even from the shore itself. This was followed by the shrill sounds of the boatswain's whistle, which had hardly died away when Fra Pacifico sprang into the rigging, and, notwithstanding his robe, climbed upward with an agility which proved that the sailor was by no means lost in the monk. Mounting rapidly from yard to yard, he ascended even higher than he had promised, and crying "May St. Francis grant me his help," sprang forthwith into the sea.

A cry of mingled terror, wonder and admiration came from the gazing crowd, excited by the emotion always caused by the brave performance of a deed in which a man's life is at stake.

It was followed by a dead silence, all waiting anxiously to see if the diver would re-appear. Three seconds, which to the expectant crowd seemed three ages, passed without a sound; then the tonsured head appeared and a formidable voice cried, "Long live St. Francis!"

In another minute the attendant boat reached the monk and hauled him triumphantly on board. The twelve boat-loads of capuchins with one voice thundered out a Te Deum, the crew of the Minerva gave three vigorous cheers, and the spectators on shore applauded with the true Neapolitan frenzy which hails any success whatever, but most particularly the triumph of some favourite saint or madonna. Needless to say that the capuchins of St. Ephrem immediately became the popular favourites, and Fra Pacifico the popular hero of Naples.

Naturally, the quest promptly improved under the new "questor." At first the brother started, as did all the other questing monks, with a simple wallet on his back. But at the end of an hour the wallet overflowed. The next day he took two, and the second was filled in the second hour. Thereupon, Fra Pacifico informed his

superiors that if he had an ass he would be able to go much further and bring back food of every kind and of the first quality.

The heads of the convent assembled and solemnly deliberated on the suggestion, which was unanimously approved, and the ass was voted by common consent. Fifty francs were handed over to Fra Pacifico with the permission to choose and buy the animal himself.

This resolution was passed on Sunday, and on Monday Fra Pacifico betook himself to the animal market, and soon decided on a sturdy "Neddy" from the Abruzzi. The owner, however, demanded a hundred francs, which the animal, in fact, was worth. Fra Pacifico reminded him that he had only to lay his cord on its back saying "St. Francis," and the ass would become the saint's property without more ado, in which case there would be no occasion to pay even the fifty francs so benevolently offered. The unfortunate dealer recognized the claims of St. Francis, but assured the monk that his choice was a most unlucky one, that this ass in particular combined all the faults of the whole family of asses in general, being greedy, obstinate, idle, given to kicking and rolling, objecting to carry anything on his back, and in short so evilly disposed that the only name found suitable to him had been "Jacobino."

Fra Pacifico uttered an exclamation of joy. All Naples was aware of the hatred which he bore to the very name of "Jacobino." From time to time the old Adam re-appeared in him, and he felt an intense longing to quarrel, curse and fight as in his unregenerate days. A vicious donkey called "Jacobino" would be the saving of him; he would at least have something to beat! In attacking, insulting, cursing an animal with such a name he would insult and curse the whole Jacobin party, which, judging by cropped heads and variegated pantaloons, seemed to be gaining ground in Naples. The name settled the matter, and the more the dealer tried to put him off, the more determined he became, until at length, fearing to lose even the fifty francs offered, the dealer gave way, and the ass became the property of St. Francis.

Whether out of sympathy for the old master or dislike to the new, Jacobino appeared resolved to justify his name. Fra Pacifico took the halter in order to lead him away, but the ass planted his feet firmly in the ground and absolutely refused to move. All the monk's efforts were in vain until he suddenly remembered that when cruising on the African coast he had seen camels led by a cord passed through the nostril. He promptly acted on his idea, and when the cord was next pulled Jacobino uttered a snort of pain and unwillingly followed where he was led. Arrived at home, Fra Pacifico's first care was to provide himself with a stout stick, and what afterwards occurred remained unknown. But the next day the brother with his staff, and the donkey duly bearing his panniers, sallied forth side by side, apparently on friendly terms with each other, except that Jacobino's hide bore marks which showed that the good understanding had not been attained without considerable protest on his part.

Fra Pacifico kept his word, and brought back such a profusion of meat, fish, vegetables, and provisions generally that the brothers were able not merely to feed themselves, but to keep a miniature market at their gates of the food they were unable to consume. Nearly four years had passed thus, and the monk and his ass still enjoyed undiminished popularity. In fact, Fra Pacifico had arrived at the point of no longer begging for what he wanted, he simply touched the article with his cord and there the matter ended. If the dealer appeared discontented, the friar produced a horn snuff-box, offered him a pinch of snuff, and generally succeeded in soothing him. But if this were insufficient, then Fra Pacifico's bronze cheeks became pale, his terrible eyes flashed lightning, and he handled his staff in a manner which promptly appeased even the most obstinate person who failed in giving willing honours to Saint Francis and his messenger.

On this particular day Fra Pacifico arrived at the Old Market and made his usual collection. As he proceeded he became aware that something unusual must have

occurred. Men stood in groups talking, women whispered together, children played unheeded, and more remarkable still, no one paid much attention to himself. Being still in want of meat, he made his way to the butchers' quarter, where the crowd seemed yet more dense and more excited, and he heard the words "French" and "Jacobins" muttered in angry tones. The particular shop which he intended to tax that morning was crowded with men and women talking and gesticulating violently. They made way for him, however, and the mistress of the shop, exclaiming that God must have sent him, rushed out and led him into the back room, where her husband, the "beccaio," was lying on his bed with one cheek laid entirely open by a sabre cut.

The unfortunate man either could not, or would not, give much information. But he had murmured "Jacobins" and "French," which were enough to cause the wildest conjectures, especially when it became known that another man had been killed, and that two others were wounded, one of whom had died in the night. Everyone had something to say on the subject, but when it was declared that the butcher and his three friends had been peaceably going home after a supper at a tavern, and had been attacked by a gang of fifteen Jacobins near the Lion's Fountain, our friend Mad Michael, who had been quietly listening and leaning against the door-post, smiled and shrugged his shoulders, as if to say that he knew better, and could tell a good deal if he chose.

"Why do you laugh at us?" asked a friend of his, generally known as the "Popinjay," "do you know so much more than we do?"

"It is not difficult to know more than you, Popinjay, who cannot even read."

"If I cannot read," replied the other, "it is because I have not had the chance. You have a foster sister who is rich and is the wife of a learned man, but you need not despise your friends on that account."

"I do not despise you at all. You are a good and

brave fellow, and if I had anything to tell I would tell it to you."

And very likely Michael might have been as good as his word, had not a heavy hand been laid on his shoulder. Michael turned round and started in terror. Behind him stood the dreaded Pasquale di Simone.

"If indeed you know something about this affair, which I doubt," Pasquale muttered in his ear, "and if you mention this something to any living soul whatever, you will certainly deserve your nickname of 'Mad Michael.' It would be wiser to go and look after your Assunta—she is in the church of the Madonna del Carmine—than to stop here and talk about things you have not seen, and which would only bring you ill-luck if you had."

"You are right, signor," answered Michael, trembling all over. "I will go at once." And he retired hastily in the direction indicated, saying to himself, "No, indeed, I will not say a word. Master Cut-throat may be sure of that. Still, it is enough to make the dumb talk to hear about fifteen men attacking these assassins, when they were six to one themselves. I don't love Jacobins, but I love the secret police even less."

Arrived at the church, Michael had some difficulty in discovering his beloved among the crowd of worshippers, but at last found her kneeling before the altar of St. Francis. Assunta was the daughter of an old fisherman called Basso-Tomeo, who did not regard Michael's suit with any favour, and had told him he would never give him his daughter until he had some honest and lucrative calling, or had inherited a fortune. Michael replied that in Naples no calling could be at once honest and lucrative, and pointed out that Basso-Tomeo and his three sons spent eighteen hours a day in the exercise of their own perfectly honest trade, and in the fifty years that the father had been at it had never succeeded in saving as much as fifty ducats. He therefore waited in hopes of the heritage, and meanwhile, as Basso-Tomeo and his sons perforce spent the six hours which re-

mained to them in sleep, there was no great difficulty in his seeing Assunta.

The fishing during the last three days had been so desperately bad that old Tomeo had made a vow to burn twelve tapers at the altar of St. Francis, and had ordered his daughter to spend the whole morning in prayer before the altar, where Michael at length found her. She beckoned to him to come and kneel beside her, and, as the nets would have been drawn by that time, they ventured to intersperse the prayers with a little lover-like conversation. Assunta explained her presence in the church, and Michael in return told her of the affray at the Lion's Fountain and the general commotion in the Old Market, whereupon Assunta, true daughter of Eve, quickly finished her prayers, made her reverence to the altar, dipped her finger in the holy water and offered the same to Michael, then took his arm and hurried away to see for herself what might be happening.

The old fisherman's trust in St. Francis had not been misplaced; the catch had indeed been a marvellous one. The nets were so heavy that at first the fishers greatly feared lest they might be bringing a dead body to the surface—a terrible omen; but as the nets rose more and more it became evident that they contained large fish which were making desperate efforts to escape. Two of the sons leaped into the water, which was up to their necks, and succeeded in getting behind the net and holding it up while Tomeo and the other brother exerted themselves to drag the net on to the shore, where a large crowd quickly assembled to see the result of the night's work. It really seemed as if the saint had, in acknowledgment of the twelve tapers, bestowed on his votaries specimens of every sort of fish found in the Bay. Chief among them was a magnificent tunny, so large and heavy that it seemed as if only a miracle could have prevented his breaking through the net, and thereby opening a way of escape for the rest. The old man was overwhelmed with joy, and recounted to the lookers on how the catch was entirely due to the favour of St. Francis. The hearers crossed themselves, and cries of "All hail to St. Francis" echoed along the shore.

All this took place in front of a fine house overlooking the quay, which was known as the Palazzo della Torre, and which belonged to the duke of that name. A young man elegantly dressed, with hair unpowdered and cut short in the Parisian style, stood at one of the first-floor windows and idly surveyed the crowd beneath him. He was Don Clemente Filomarino, the duke's younger brother, in disfavour with the Court on account of his liberal opinions. He had, in fact, been recently imprisoned during eighteen months, which, far from causing him to alter his views, had only strengthened them. Having been declared innocent, he rashly concluded he had nothing to fear, and had become one of the habitués of the French Embassy.

His imprisonment had nearly driven his elder brother frantic. The duke, fully twenty-five years older than Don Clemente, had two objects in life. He loved his brother, who had been left an orphan at five years old, with an overpowering devotion, and he was a most enthusiastic collector. The Royal Library itself contained nothing that could compete with the duke's nearly perfect set of Elzevirs, and his collection of autographs was the finest in the world. That very morning he had received information that one of the Elzevirs, hitherto wanting on his shelves, had been found, and he hastened off to the bookseller who announced the fact in order to secure the precious volume. On his way downstairs he entered his brother's room in order to impart this excellent piece of news, and bade him an affectionate farewell. Don Clemente returned to his window, from whence he could observe the excitement caused by Tomeo's wonderful catch, and could also see something which the fisherman, surrounded by an admiring crowd, could not see.

Down the quay came Fra Pacifico driving his ass, marching proudly in the middle of the pavement, and taking a line which must infallibly bring him into collision with the freshly-caught heap of fish. Finding the crowd in his way, he cried, "Room for St. Francis. Room!"

The crowd divided. Basso-Tomeo grew pale, knowing what would happen. Fra Pacifico, who had hitherto found no fish worth taking, smiled with delight. He laid his cord on the splendid tunny, and pronounced the dreaded words:

"In the name of St. Francis."

The old fisherman at first seemed inclined to dispute the matter, but on second thoughts stepped back, and said meekly, "St. Francis gave it. St. Francis takes it. Hail to St. Francis. The fish is yours, Father!"

"Oh fool!" exclaimed Don Clemente from above. And as the crowd looked up, not knowing whom he addressed, he continued: "Yes, I mean you, Basso-Tomeo. You and your sons are honest hard working-men, and you allow the fruits of your labour to be extorted from you by an idle, impudent knave of a monk."

Fra Pacifico, finding himself thus suddenly attacked, uttered a howl of rage and shook his staff at Don Clemente.

"Keep your stick for your ass, monk; it will not frighten anyone else."

"I warn you, signor dandy, that my ass is called 'Jacobino.'"

"Then the donkey has got the name of a man, and his driver the name of the ass!"

The crowd laughed. Fra Pacifico, more furious than ever, assailed Don Clemente with the worst names he could think of.

"He is a Jacobin! My brothers, do you not see he is a Jacobin with his short hair and trousers. Jacobin! Jacobin!"

"As much as you like, I am proud of being one. Do you know what a Jacobin is?"

"He is a demagogue, a republican, a regicide."

"In Italy he is an honest man who loves his country, and who thinks it unfair that when a poor fisherman, who has worked hard all night, has for once in his life taken a valuable fish, it should be taken from him by a man—no, a monk—a man is one who helps his neigh-

bours and not one who steals from them, one who works for his wife and children, and not one who lives in idleness at the expense of others. A Jacobin desires equality, that is to say, the same laws for both poor and rich, liberty for all alike, and who considers other men as his brothers. Yes, that is what Jacobin means, and I am proud to be one."

"You hear," cried the furious monk; "he insults the Church, and he insults St. Francis! He is an Atheist!"

"What is that?" enquired various voices.

"A man who does not believe in God, nor in the Madonna, nor in Jesus Christ, nor in the miracle of Saint Januarius!"

A cry of anger rose from the crowd, and clenched fists were shaken in Don Clemente's direction. The monk produced his last and most telling invective—

"And who is also a friend of the French!"

"And you," cried Don Clemente, "are asses for whom panniers can never be made too large, nor burdens too heavy."

He closed the window. But a shower of stones came hurtling through the air, and the glass fell in fragments. One piece caught Don Clemente on the cheek and cut it. Furiously angry, he caught up his loaded gun and shouted, "Who threw that stone?"

"I," answered a short thick-set man, crossing his arms on his breast, "I, Gaetano Mammone." It was a name which later acquired a terrible celebrity as belonging to a brutal savage who boasted that he drank the blood of his victims.

Don Clemente took aim and fired; the gun only flashed in the pan.

"A miracle!" cried the monk, taking away the fish on his ass. Two hundred voices re-echoed the cry, but above them all rose Mammone's:

"Kill the Jacobin! Kill the Atheist! Kill the Frenchman!"

Don Clemente fired again into the crowd. This time a man fell. The imprudent young man's fate was now sealed, and he saw that nothing remained but to sell his

life as dearly as possible. The mob rushed in at the great gates of the palace, others brought a ladder and attacked Don Clemente's window. He knocked down the first who mounted with the butt end of his gun, and shot the two next; but what could one man do against an infuriated crowd. The door behind him was soon broken down, and he was overwhelmed and surrounded by a crowd of savages, all armed with knives and daggers. Others had mounted to the floor above, and were carrying out their work of destruction on inanimate objects. The duke's library was sacked, and precious volumes, manuscripts, autographs were flung into the street, where, mixed up with broken furniture and wood brought from the quays, they were formed into a funeral pile, on the top of which they flung Don Clemente's inanimate body and prepared to consume it.

The duke, returning triumphant with his precious volume, saw from a distance a large crowd in front of his palace, and as he drew nearer, discovered that a cascade of books and papers was descending from the upper windows like a flight of birds. He sprang out of his carriage, and uttering inarticulate cries, forced his way through the crowd with a strength hitherto unknown. At length he reached the centre, and saw the mangled body of his beloved brother lying on a pile composed of every sort of débris.

"Ah! Wretched traitors and cowardly murderers!" he cried to the throng, "at least we can die together," and he threw himself on his brother's body and clasped it in his arms.

The crowd shouted for joy. Instead of one insensible victim they had now two. The pyre burnt slowly, and only at the end of three hours did the crowd begin to disperse.

Thus perished the Duke della Torre and his brother, the first victims of the outbreaks of popular fury at Naples.

The arms of the city of azure sky and sea are a mare "passant." True daughter of the savage horses of Diomed, she has often demanded and been regaled on human flesh.

CHAPTER VIII

GENERAL CHAMPIONNET

WHILE Hector Caraffa was making his way along little-used mountain paths, Garat, the French ambassador, was travelling as fast as four horses could take him on the high road between Naples and Rome. The high road, unfortunately, was a very bad one, but as it must be a very ill wind which suits no one, this circumstance brought much profit to Don Antonio della Rota, so called on account of the nobility of Spanish descent which he claimed, and also on account of his profession—"Rota" meaning a wheel)—which was that of chief wheelwright in the little post town of Itri, where, once upon a time, Horace supped with Capiton and slept at Murena's. Don Antonio had very wisely established himself close to the posting-house, and opposite the little hotel, which, by calling itself "The Rest of Horace," claimed to occupy the site where Murena's house had stood. At this particular date a marriage festival was in progress, Antonio's daughter Francesca being about to espouse her father's foreman, Peppino, and the young people of the village were dancing to the sound of a guitar and two tambourines, while their elders talked and drank and looked on.

Leaning against a wall which divided the wheelwright's premises from those of his neighbour, the harness-maker, was a young man of about two and twenty, who also looked on, and whose presence, judging by the glances cast in his direction, was regarded with

extreme disfavour both by Antonio and bride and bridegroom. He was tall and fair, apparently half peasant, half townsman, while the soft wide-brimmed hat lying on the wall beside him seemed to imply a clerical education. He was the youngest son of a family named Pezza, whose parents had always intended him for the Church, and who, when he had acquired the arts of reading and writing, had obtained for him a place as server in the church at Itri, an employment which caused him to be known as Fra Michael.

For some years the boy acolyte was a model of devotion, but, as he grew older, worldly desires awoke in him, and when he became eighteen he announced, to the great grief of his parents, that he would serve the Church no longer, and entered the service of Giansimone, the harness-maker, as apprentice. Here he applied himself, not only to his trade, but to quietly acquiring the various accomplishments from which his education had debarred him. It was said that he had become the best shot in the village, and could make formidable play with his knife, while the village maidens would stop under his window to listen while he played the guitar. But the one and only girl whom he wished to attract remained wholly insensible, and she was Francesca, Antonio's daughter.

The wheelwright was not long in noticing young Pezza's devotion to his daughter. Francesca, interrogated on the subject, said she had nothing against Michael, but she wished to marry Peppino, which suited her father's views also, and the pair were betrothed. Antonio then betook himself to his neighbour, and asked him to dismiss Michael. Giansimone promised to do so, but the task was not an easy one. Michael worked well, and there was absolutely no cause of complaint against him. Week after week passed, and at length Giansimone, urged by Antonio, summoned up his courage and gave Michael notice to leave without delay. Michael simply refused to go, saying that although there was no formal contract between them, there was a verbal agreement, which would be binding to honourable men, and

as long as there was no fault proved against him, he had a perfect right to remain.

"But if I order you to go," said Giansimone.

"If you turn me out that would be another matter."

"Then you would go?"

"I would go, yes; but you would have treated me with unmerited injustice. It would be an unpardonable insult, and—as sure as my name is Michael Pezza—I should kill you for it."

"I believe you would," cried the harness-maker, drawing back.

"Well, my dear master," said the young man, "having had the luck to get an apprentice who is neither idle, nor dishonest, nor a drunkard, would it not be better to tell Don Antonio that you are too honourable to drive away a poor lad who deserves nothing but praise?"

"I think it would be better," said Giansimone.

"And also more prudent. Let us shake hands upon it."

The two clasped hands, and Michael resumed his work as quietly as if nothing had happened. But the next day, which was Sunday, he dressed carefully and went as usual to mass, where he met his father and mother. Having escorted them home, Michael asked and obtained their consent to his marriage with Francesca should her father and she be willing to accept him; and then betook himself to Don Antonio's house in order to make his proposal in due form.

He found Antonio in company with Francesca and Peppino, and their astonishment at his appearance was so evident, and their conversation came to such an abrupt termination, that it was clear his visit was as unwelcome as it was unexpected. Giansimone had never dared to tell Antonio of his failure in dismissing his apprentice, and had merely begged him to have patience and wait another week. Michael saluted all three courteously, and asked permission to speak to Antonio in private.

Antonio agreed with some hesitation, and signed to the others to leave the room. They went out arm-in-

arm, laughing in Michael's face as they went. But whatever torture the latter felt he made no sign.

"Sir," said Michael when the door had closed behind them, "it is perhaps unnecessary to tell you that I love your daughter."

"Why tell me this?" replied Antonio scornfully.

"Because I come to ask her hand in marriage."

The wheelwright burst into a roar of laughter. "What," he said, "does Signor Michael Pezza honour Don Antonio by asking his daughter in marriage?"

"I do not think I am doing Don Antonio any particular honour," replied Michael calmly. "I think the honour is reciprocal, and I know well you will refuse me."

"Why expose yourself to a refusal then?"

"Simply to satisfy my conscience."

Don Antonio laughed again, then catching a glimpse of Michael's meaning. "To satisfy your conscience," he repeated, "does that mean that if I do not consent some misfortune will happen?"

"Precisely," replied Michael with Spartan brevity.

"And what is likely to happen?"

"God knows," said the young man. "I can tell you only this. As long as I live, Francesca shall never be the wife of another."

"Go to, you are mad!" exclaimed Antonio.

"I am not mad, but I am going," said Michael. Half way to the door he stopped. "Remember," he said, "that God punishes not the mad, but those who drove them to madness." He then returned to Giansimone's house, shut himself up in his room, and gave way to blank despair. Two hours later someone knocked at his door. He opened it and found one of his comrades, who kindly invited him to come and play at bowls, giving as a reason that a person who was unhappy needed amusement.

"Am I unhappy to-day then?" asked Michael.

"I should suppose so. People are generally unhappy when they are in love and are refused the girl they want."

"You know that then?"

"All the town know it, and on good authority. Peppino told us himself."

"Ah! What did Peppino say?"

"He said: 'Fra Michael came to Don Antonio to ask Francesca in marriage, and was sent away with a flea in his ear.'"

"Indeed! Did he say anything else?"

"Yes. He said: 'If that is not enough, I can give him one in the other ear.'"

"You are right," said Michael, assuring himself that his knife was safe in his pocket; "I want some amusement; let us go and have a game."

The two went quietly out together, and soon reached a wide avenue of plane trees, used as a promenade by the elders of Itri, and as a playground by the younger people. At least twenty different groups were playing various games, amongst which bowls appeared to be the favourite. Michael looked for Peppino, and at last found him in the set furthest from the promenade. He walked straight up to him. Peppino, who was discussing a throw, saw him, and in spite of himself, shrank before the blue lightning of his rival's eyes.

"That you, Michael?" he said. "I thought you never played at bowls."

"No more I do. I come for that other flea you promised me."

Peppino was holding the small bowl in his hand which is used as a mark for the others. Hearing this, he assumed the offensive, and flung the ball at Michael with all his strength. Michael, who had kept a careful watch on his movements, simply ducked his head. The ball passed within two inches of his temple and broke into fragments against the wall. Michael picked up a stone.

"If I broke your head with this," he said, "it would only be what you tried to do for me. Instead of putting it in the middle of your forehead, as David did to Goliath, I shall put it in the middle of your hat." And he threw the stone with so true an aim that it struck Peppino's hat right in the centre and carried it away. "Now," he continued, "men do not fight with balls and stones,

but with steel." And he drew his knife as he spoke. Turning to the young men who were interested spectators: "You can bear witness," he said, "that Peppino is the aggressor. Watch and see what happens."

"With how many inches of steel do we fight?" asked Peppino, who stood ready knife in hand.

"With the whole blade," answered Pezza; "there is then no chance of treachery."

"To the first or second blood-letting?" demanded Peppino.

"To the death," replied his adversary. The words fell in the midst of a sepulchral silence, for the spectators understood that something terrible was about to happen.

Each combatant took off his coat and wrapped it round his left arm to serve as a shield. They were a great contrast, the one sturdy and muscular, the other lithe and active. Michael was clearly the weaker, and probably the less skilled of the two; nevertheless, three-fourths of the spectators would have voted for him had their opinion been asked.

The first few blows were either lost in the air or warded off by the left arm. Suddenly Peppino's right hand became covered with blood; Michael's knife had cut across all four fingers.

Michael bounded back so as to allow Peppino to change hands if necessary. The latter held his knife in his teeth, bound up his hand with his handkerchief, changed his coat to the right arm, and took his knife in the left hand. Michael did the same. Half a minute more, and Peppino was wounded a second time, in the left arm. He uttered a cry of rage, understanding that Pezza meant, not to kill, but to disarm him.

Michael caught his adversary's left wrist in his right hand and held it in an iron grasp. Peppino made desperate efforts to free himself, but in vain. His knife was now useless, and Michael, had he chosen, could have stabbed him any moment. The arm, weakened by loss of blood, became more and more numb, his fingers relaxed their hold, and the knife fell to the ground. Michael put his foot on it.

One only chance remained to Peppino. He sprang on his enemy and seized him in his powerful arms, which were, however, weakened by wounds. Michael returned the pressure, and the two wrestled furiously. To the onlookers' surprise, Peppino, who was counted the best wrestler in the place, but who had never encountered Michael before, did not seem any better than his opponent. Suddenly the two rolled together on the ground. Michael, by a sudden desperate effort, had lifted Peppino and thrown him, and had fallen upon him. Peppino lay on his back. Michael knelt upon him and held his knife at his throat.

"Gentlemen," said he, "has this duel been fought honourably and according to rule?"

"Honourably and according to rule," said the spectators with one voice.

"Is Peppino's life in my power?"

"It is," came the unanimous answer.

"Do you agree, Peppino?" asked Michael, pricking the fallen man with the point of his knife.

"Yes. Kill me; it is your right," gasped Peppino.

"Would you have killed me if you had won instead of me?"

"Yes; but I shouldn't have been so long about it."

Michael bent over him, and whispered:

"You agree that your life is in my power. Well, I give it you, or rather, I lend it you. The day on which you marry Francesca I shall take it again. Do you understand?"

"Ah, wretch!" cried Peppino; "you are the devil himself. You are not Fra Michele, but Fra Diavolo!"

"You can call me what you please," said Michael, "but remember that your life belongs to me, and if the event I speak of comes to pass I shall take it without asking your permission."

Therewith he rose, wiped his knife on his shirt sleeve, and put it quietly in his pocket. "That is all," he said; "there is nothing to prevent your finishing your game. Adieu." And he walked slowly away, leaving the spectators wondering what he could have said to Pep-

pino, who remained motionless half risen from the ground in the attitude of the Dying Gladiator. They would have guessed easily enough had the latter renounced Francesca. But he did not do so, and the marriage was fixed for the end of September, before the vintage should begin. The duel took place at the end of May, and the succeeding months passed quietly until September 7th, when the priest announced in the church that the wedding would take place on the 23rd.

The betrothed pair were in church, and Michael at no great distance from them. Peppino glanced at him, but he appeared quite unmoved. Only as they left the church Michael came close to Peppino and whispered in his ear:

“It is well! You have still eighteen days to live.”

The next Sunday the bans were read a second time. Michael repeated his warning, but the days had dwindled to ten. The third Sunday the same thing happened. Peppino's lease of life was reduced to two days only.

After a wild and stormy night the morning of September 23rd was a magnificent one. The wedding was to take place at eleven in the morning. The guests were assembled at Antonio's house, and the terrace and garden re-echoed with joyful sounds. But from time to time the three persons most concerned looked anxiously at the sombre young man who surveyed the proceedings from the other side of the boundary wall, and whom they had no right to drive away however ominous his presence might seem.

Just as one of the most lively Tarantellas was finished, a very familiar sound struck Don Antonio's ear. It was the shrill tinkle of the bells of post-horses, accompanied by the bass rumble of a heavy carriage, and the hoarse cries of two postboys summoning Don Antonio himself. Frequently Don Antonio's aid was required for a damaged vehicle, and not infrequently that of the village doctor for a damaged occupant. In this case, however, the occupant had escaped unscathed, and when to the postboys' invitation to “Make haste, Don Antonio, the

gentleman is in a great hurry," Antonio answered "So much the worse for him; we are not working to-day," the traveller himself entered the court and enquired:

"And why are you not working to-day, Citizen Antonio, may I ask?"

Antonio, vexed at the unfortunate moment of the occurrence, and further annoyed by being addressed as "Citizen," a style which he considered quite beneath his dignity, would have given a rude answer, but glancing at the traveller, concluded he was too great a person to be insulted. He was, in fact, the French ambassador, whose carriage had broken a wheel shortly before, and who, consequently, had been obliged to traverse the last mile on foot. From his costume, Antonio took him for a soldier, and a general at least, and answered civilly, "Excuse me, General; had I had the honour to know to whom I was speaking I should have said, 'We can do no work for another hour.'"

"And why cannot you work at once," asked Garat in a tone which implied that if the delay were a mere question of money he was willing to produce it.

"Because the church bell is ringing. Excellency, I could not keep the priest waiting were it for the king himself."

"I seem to have fallen into the middle of a wedding. Is that handsome girl the bride?"

"Yes; she is my daughter."

"I congratulate you, and will wait for her sake. How long will the ceremony last?"

"About three-quarters of an hour. If you will accompany us it will not seem so long. Or will you remain here and drink a glass with us on our return in honour of the bride? We shall work all the better afterwards."

"Thank you, my friend, I accept, and will remain here." Everybody hastened towards the church except Peppino, who hung back. He went up to Michael, offering his hand, and said with a forced smile: "Cannot we let bygones be bygones, and make an honest peace?"

"Not so," answered Michael solemnly. "You can

make your peace with God, and with Him only. Lover of Francesca, you have yet one hour to live." He turned round and disappeared.

Peppino made the sign of the cross, murmuring :

"My God! My God! I commend my soul to Thee." He then hastened after the others and took his place in the procession.

The Ambassador, left alone, with nothing to do but to look out upon the road, was greatly surprised at seeing French uniforms appearing in the distance, coming apparently from Rome towards Naples. As the uniforms drew nearer Garat discerned that they were worn by a corporal and four dragoons, who were escorting a travelling carriage which seemed to regulate its pace by theirs. The corporal, seeing Garat, and knowing by his uniform that he must be a Republican of high rank, galloped up to him and saluted respectfully.

"My friend," said Garat; "I am the Ambassador of the Republic at Naples, which authorizes me to enquire whom you are escorting."

"Two old aristocrat women," replied the officer, "and a man who says 'Princess!' when he speaks to them."

"Do you know their names?"

"One is called Madame Victoire and the other Madame Adelaïde. It seems they are aunts of the late tyrant who was guillotined. They fled to Austria, and then they came to Rome. Then, when the Republic was declared, they wanted to run further, but it seems there was an older sister, who was called Madame Sophie, and she became ill. They would not leave her, which was good of them, and she died and was buried. Then they asked leave of General Championnet to go to Naples, and the General sent for me and said, 'Corporal Martin, you are an educated man, and know how to speak to ladies. Take four men and escort these old ladies till they are over the frontier; they are daughters of France after all. And so treat them with respect, and speak with your hand at the salute, as if they were superiors. There is a man with them, their equerry, who is called the Count de Chatillon.' 'But, General,'

I said, 'I thought there were no more Counts?' 'Not in France,' he told me, 'but there are a few up and down in Italy, and they will all like it better if you say "Monsieur le Comte" than if you say "Citizen."' So I have done so all the way, and it really seemed to please the poor old ladies, and it has been 'Martin' here and 'Martin' there whenever they wanted anything. But I must have bored you with all this talk."

"Not at all," said Garat. "I am much interested. How far were you to escort them?"

"Over the frontier, and further if they wished."

"Well, then you have fulfilled your orders. You are now two stages beyond the frontier, and it is dangerous to go further. You must tell the princesses that your service is over, and you must return."

"The poor things will be greatly distressed. What is to become of them without their Martin? See, they are frightened, and calling for me already."

In fact, while Martin had been telling his long story the carriage had stopped at the little inn, and the old ladies, seeing their protector in earnest conversation with a Republican official, evidently of high rank, became alarmed lest their progress should be interfered with, and were calling for Martin in their most dulcet tones. Garat, not wishing for an awkward interview, retired into the wheelwright's garden. Martin, with his hand at the salute, appeared at the carriage door and respectfully informed the royal ladies that he had received orders to at once return to Rome. The princesses were much disturbed, and finally requested their equerry to interview the interfering Republican on the subject.

Garat had received a first-rate education, and was a man of distinction and of elegant manners, who only used the Republican code of speech when obliged to do so. Seeing Chatillon approaching him, he rose and went to meet him. The two exchanged courteous salutations, much more in the style of Versailles than that of the Directory.

"Am I to address you as 'Monsieur' or 'Citizen?'" asked Chatillon with a smile.

"Whichever you please, Monsieur le Comte," answered Garat. "I shall be honoured in replying to any questions on the part of their Royal Highnesses."

"Really," said the Count, "it is indeed a pleasure to find a civilized man in this howling wilderness. Their Royal Highnesses—since you permit the use of this title to the daughters of Louis XV.—wish to know what prevents their retaining the escort which General Championnet was kind enough to give them."

"The difficulty, sir, is caused by the fact that since midnight yesterday the Two Sicilies and the Republic are at war. Consequently, an escort of five hostile soldiers would be for the princesses a danger instead of a protection. For the rest, I should be sorry to expose these royal ladies to the certainty of insult and their escort to assassination. I hope, sir, the explanation is satisfactory."

"So satisfactory, sir, that I should be grateful if you would repeat it yourself to their Royal Highnesses."

"I would do so with pleasure but for the melancholy fact that I am aware my presence would be extremely disagreeable to these distinguished ladies."

"May I ask why, sir? It is evident that you are a man of the world, and exceedingly courteous."

"Because, for that very reason, the Convention selected me for the fatal honour of reading his death sentence to King Louis XVI."

The Comte de Chatillon sprang back as if he had suddenly seen a serpent in his path. "Then; then," he cried, "you must be Garat of the Convention."

"Even so, Count. If my name produces such an effect on you, you can easily guess what it would mean to these poor princesses who were the King's aunts. It is true they did not greatly love their nephew when he was alive, but now that he is dead they adore his memory. Death is like night; it changes the look of things."

Chatillon bowed and went to report the result of his interview to the princesses, who were greatly troubled at the idea of continuing their journey unprotected. He

wisely remained silent on the subject of Garat's identity, which would have disturbed them still more. While they were still discussing the subject, a servant came to the door and announced that a young man wished to speak to the Count de Chatillon.

The Count went out, and soon returned and reported that the young man was a soldier of Condé's army, and was bearer of a letter from the Count de Narbonne addressed to their Royal Highnesses.

The messenger was desired to enter, and proved to be a young man of about twenty-four, whose appearance and manner indicated good birth and breeding. He bowed respectfully at the door, then advanced into the room, and kneeling on one knee presented his letter to Madame Adelaïde. She signed to the young man to rise, and requested Chatillon to read the letter to her. It was short, and merely recommended Giovan Battista di Cesare of Corsica to the kind notice of their Royal Highnesses, adding that he and his friends had fought in Condé's army, and that the princesses would have no cause to regret any kindness shewn to this bearer. In answer to Madame Adelaïde's questions, di Cesare explained that Condé having disbanded his army, he and his friends found themselves stranded, and had been advised to go to Naples, where there was every prospect of war breaking out, and M. de Narbonne had given him this letter in hopes that the princesses might recommend him and his friends to the King. They had followed in the ladies' track, and now, hearing that the French escort was to return, they begged to have the honour of replacing it. They were six in number, besides di Cesare, and they would gladly die, if need be, in the ladies' service.

"Well," said Madame Adelaïde, "this is truly fortunate! At the moment when our escort fails us Providence supplies another. I thank Heaven for delivering us from those Jacobin soldiers and their corporal. Take ten louis, Chatillon, and give them to Martin for himself and his men. It must not be said they have served us for nothing."

"I will do so, madame," replied Chatillon, "but I do not think he will accept."

"He would rather take them by force, no doubt, but this time he must accept. But what is that music. Is the village serenading us?"

"It is a wedding party returning from church," said the young Corsican, smiling. "The daughter of the wheelwright opposite is married to-day. As there is a rival in the field it is thought there may be a tragedy before the day is over."

"That is no concern of ours," said Madame Adelaïde. "Will you present your companions to us? We shall start at four o'clock. With an escort such as yours we need not fear to travel at night."

Di Cesare brought in his companions and presented them one by one. They were graciously received, especially M. de Bocche-chiampe, who alone could claim nobility of descent, and to whom the princesses accorded the privilege of dining with them, an invidious distinction which the young man would gladly have been spared. Just then Chatillon returned.

"What did Corporal Martin say?" asked Madame Adelaïde.

"He said that if anyone but myself had made him such an offer he would have had his ears cut off for his pains. As for me, he forgave me, and even accepted what I offered on my own account."

"And what might that be?"

"Simply to shake hands."

"To shake hands!! Chatillon! You offered to shake hands with a Jacobin! It is incredible. A corporal who refuses ten louis and a Chatillon who shakes hands with him! What can the world be coming to! Of what is society composed in these days?"

"Or rather," said Madame Victoire, looking up from her book of devotions, "from what is it decomposed!"

"You are right, sister, it is decomposed. Shall we live to see it recomposed? I doubt it. Meanwhile, Chatillon, give the necessary orders. We start at four."

The music which had surprised the ladies was that

which preceded the returning wedding-party. Both Peppino and Francesca cast anxious glances at the crumbling boundary wall, and felt relieved when they saw it deserted. It was mid-day, the magnificent sunlight came tempered through the vine-leaf trellis which sheltered the guests, the birds sang and fluttered, and the wine, red and gold, sparkled in the light. Peppino saw life surrounding him instead of death, and breathed more freely. For a moment he forgot Michael Pezza and his terrible threat.

Antonio looked at the damaged carriage, and went up to Garat. "Is it really necessary that your Excellency should continue your journey to-day?" he enquired.

"It is absolutely necessary," said Garat. "I have already lost three or four hours, and I am expected in Rome on business of the utmost importance."

"Well then, an honest man keeps his word. When you have done us the honour to drink a glass of wine to the health of these young people, we will at once set to work."

The glasses were filled, the finest, distinguished by a gold rim, was presented to the stranger, who drank its contents to the health of the young couple, there was a general cry of "Hurrah!" and the music struck up anew. "Now, Peppino," said Antonio, "there is a time for all things. Kiss your wife, my boy, and let us set to work."

Peppino did not wait to be told twice. He took Francesca in his arms and bent over her. But, before his lips had touched hers, the report of a gun and the whistle of a ball were heard. "Oh! oh!" said Garat, "that must have been meant for me!"

"No," said Peppino, sinking to the ground, "it is for me." Francesca fell on her knees beside him, and in a few moments he breathed his last.

A light bluish smoke was visible among the poplars, and further off a young man, gun in hand, was seen climbing the hill with rapid bounds. "Fra Michele," cried the guests, "it is Fra Michele."

The fugitive stopped on a ledge of rock, and cried

with a threatening gesture, "I am no longer Fra Michele; henceforth I am Fra Diavolo!" And it is by this second name of sinister import that he has become known to posterity.

On the following morning, while Garat was still continuing his much-interrupted journey to Rome, two French officers were walking up and down one of the large halls in the Palazzo Corsini, stopping every now and then to consult the maps with which some of the tables were littered. Other tables bore witness to the varied tastes of the present tenant, one supporting an entire collection of Piranesi's engravings, while others were heaped with books, classic and modern, chiefly relating to Roman history or Roman war, and an ample provision of writing materials adorned each table. The two officers seemed about the same age; one was General Championnet; the other, a trifle younger, bore tokens of a northern origin. Irish by descent, but born in France, he was tall and fair, blue-eyed and with decided features. He was Joseph Alexander Macdonald, later a Marshal of France and Duke of Tarento. They were deep in conversation when Macdonald suddenly exclaimed, "Surely that is a travelling carriage at the entrance. Good Heavens! it is Garat himself!"

"Not the Ambassador surely. Impossible!" said Championnet.

"It is indeed. Look, General."

Championnet hastened to the door. Garat had already reached the landing. The two shook hands, but wasted no time in compliments. Macdonald would have left them, but—

"You are my left arm," said Championnet, "and sometimes my right as well. Better hear what there is to hear."

Garat hastily told them of the events at Naples, of Nelson's arrival and his own midnight departure; then of his detention at Itri, where he had stopped the princesses' escort. He had ordered the corporal to bring on his carriage as soon as it could be mended, had hired another at Fondi, and come on himself after a delay of

six hours. He also mentioned the tragic occurrence at the wedding and the escape of Fra Diavolo to the mountains, where he would probably make a livelihood by brigandage. The corporal and escort would, he hoped, arrive in the course of another day.

Championnet let him finish his story without interruption, but when it came to an end without Salvato's name being once mentioned, he began to be seriously anxious as to the fate of his envoy, and was going to question Garat on the subject when the door opened and an orderly announced that a man in peasant's attire insisted on seeing the General. Behind him a louder voice exclaimed:

"It is I, General. Hector Caraffa. I bring news of Salvato."

"Come in. Come in, Hector!" cried Championnet. "You are most welcome. I was just going to question the Ambassador."

Hector rushed in and embraced Championnet. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "how good it is to see you again!"

"But what of Salvato? Hector, what news have you?"

"Both bad and good. Good, because he ought to be dead and is still alive. Bad, because they got the letter he was taking to the Ambassador."

"Had he then a letter for me?" asked Garat. "And what was in it?"

"This is most unfortunate," said Championnet. "My letter was to tell you that we are utterly unfit to fight. We want men, money, food, munitions, every single thing we ought to have. I begged you to maintain peaceable relations as long as you possibly could. If my letter has fallen into the enemy's hands it is a great misfortune, but it would be worse still if they killed Salvato. What really happened, Hector?"

"They only missed killing him by a miracle. It seems he was waylaid, and six men set upon him. Well, you know Salvato! He killed two of them and wounded two more, and then the Queen's cutthroat, Pasquale, the leader, flung his knife and planted it in Salvato's chest

up to the handle. Well, some people have luck! He fell into the arms of the most beautiful woman in Naples, who has hidden him from all eyes, even her husband's."

"But the wound," cried the General. "Is it mortal? Salvato is as a son to me."

"The wound is certainly serious, very serious, but the best doctor in Naples, one of ourselves, is looking after him. But there are other things. The people are rising against our party. Cirillo was delayed two hours on his way to me by a crowd of lazzaroni, who burnt alive the two brothers della Torre in front of their house."

"The wretches!" exclaimed Championnet.

"Then I hear there was a great council at the palace, and war against the Republic was decided on. I know that by Nicolino Caracciolo, who has a friend among the ladies-in-waiting. Austria supplies the general, who is Baron Charles Mack."

"That is not particularly alarming."

"No, but what is alarming is that England has put a finger in the pie, and provided money. There are 60,000 men ready to march on Rome in eight days if necessary. Well, I think that is all."

"It is enough, in all conscience!" remarked Championnet.

"You see," he continued, turning to Garat, "there is not a moment to lose. Luckily, two million cartridges arrived yesterday. Cannon there are none to speak of, but with two million cartridges and ten or twelve thousand bayonets behind them we can take the Neapolitan cannon and use them."

"I thought you had only nine thousand men?"

"No more I have, but I hope for a reinforcement of three thousand. Can you get on to Milan, Hector?"

"As soon as I have had some food and a change of clothes. I am dying of hunger, and, as you see, plastered with mud from head to foot. The roads are awful. I do not wonder that your orderlies objected to let me in."

Championnet rang, and his valet appeared.

"Breakfast, a bath, and clothes for Citizen Caraffa.

The bath in ten minutes, the clothes in twenty, breakfast in half-an-hour."

"But, General," said the servant, "your clothes will not fit Citizen Caraffa; he is a head taller than you."

"Here," said Garat, "take this key and open my portmanteau. The Count de Ruvo is about my size; you will find linen and a suit of clothes. As for the fit, well, it is war time!"

"At Milan you will find Joubert. Are you listening, Hector? I am speaking to you. At Milan you will find Joubert. Tell him he must manage as he best can, but unless he sends me three thousand men Rome will be lost. He had better send Kellermann if he can; he is a first-rate cavalry man, and it is cavalry we want. You must guide them, Hector, and make for Civita Castellana; we shall probably meet there. I need hardly tell you to be quick about it."

"As I have just done seventy-two leagues of mountain road in forty-eight hours, it seems superfluous."

"Besides," said Garat, "I can take Citizen Caraffa on to Milan. My carriage must arrive to-morrow."

"You will not wait for your travelling carriage, Ambassador; you will take mine. There is not a moment to lose. Macdonald, will you write in my name to all the outposts. They are on no account to resist, but once they know that the enemy has crossed the frontier, to fall back upon Civita Castellana."

"What!" cried Garat, "will you not even attempt to defend Rome?"

"I shall abandon it, if I can, without firing a shot, but not for very long."

"Well, General, you know more of these things than I do."

"I? I know no more of war than you can learn from Macchiavelli."

"And what says Macchiavelli?"

"Must I quote Macchiavelli to a diplomatist who ought to know him by heart? Well, he says—Listen, Hector; and you, Macdonald. Macchiavelli says: 'The whole secret of war lies in two things, in

doing whatever the enemy did not expect you to do, and in allowing him to do whatever you expected him to do. By observing the first precept you ruin his calculations for defence, and by observing the second you upset his plans of attack.' Read Macchiavelli, Garat, he was a really great man, and when you have read him——"

"Well, what then?"

"Read him all over again."

The door opened, and the valet re-appeared.

"Here comes Scipio to say the bath is ready. While Macdonald writes his letters I will give Garat an account of all the plundering done here by the Directory's agents, which he can repeat to the Directory in Paris. Then we will breakfast, and drink to our speedy entrance into Naples in the best wine in the Papal cellars."

CHAPTER IX

ANDREW BAKER

It is ten o'clock in the morning, on the Quay of Mergellina, much crowded with fishermen, lazzaroni and humble folk of every kind who hasten, mingled with cooks from the great houses, towards the market. There, King Ferdinand, dressed as a fisherman, stands behind a table covered with fish, selling his catch himself; but we are more interested for the moment in old friend Michael the Fool, who, instead of keeping pace with the rest, stops at the little door into the garden already well-known to our readers. For at the garden door, leaning against the wall, gazing into the blue sky, or rather into her wandering thought, stands a young girl to whom her secondary position has not allowed us until this moment to give more than slight attention.

It is Giovannina, generally shortened to Nina, Luisa San Felice's own maid. Of a peasant type quite special to the neighbourhood of Naples; she is a girl aged between nineteen and twenty, of medium height, with a perfect figure, and to whom association with a lady has given refined tastes rare in her class. Her abundant, carefully-dressed hair is flame-like in its fiery fairness; her complexion a milky white studded with freckles; her eyes greenish, with golden irises and contracting pupils, as in cats; her thin, pale lips, becoming blood red at the slightest emotion, cover irreproachable teeth; and her veinless hands are white and cold as marble. Up to the present she has seemed much attached to her mistress, and beyond a slight frivolity has given her little cause for complaint.

To Giovannina her inferiors and her equals have paid their court, but she has never responded to any of them; her ambition is to rise, and she has declared twenty times that she would prefer to remain single all her life than marry a man beneath her, or even in her own rank. Michael and Giovannina are old acquaintances; during the six years Giovannina has spent at Luisa's they have had many opportunities of meeting, and Michael also, like other young men fascinated by the girl's physical and moral oddity, has tried to make love to her; but she has explained to him without any circumlocution that she will never love anyone but a *signor*, even at the risk that the *signor* of her choice will not respond. Upon that, Michael, no platonist, has wished her every prosperity, and has turned to Assunta, who, having no aristocratic pretensions, is perfectly contented with him, and he, excellent young man, bearing no ill will to Giovannina, has asked and obtained the promise of her friendship.

Thus, instead of going on his way to the royal market, Michael, seeing Giovannina so pensive at the garden door, stopped.

"What are you gazing up into the sky for?" he asked.

The young girl shrugged her shoulders: "I dream, as you see."

"Ah, like the great lady you hope to be."

Giovannina looked about her, and then said:

"There is a good deal to be dreaming about. Are you as devoted to your foster-sister as I am to my mistress?"

"Yes, indeed! For life and death! She can be sure of that."

"Well then, she will probably need you some day as she needs me already. What do you suppose I am doing at this door?"

"Day-dreaming as you told me."

"Well, have you seen the Chevalier San Felice anywhere on the road?"

"Yes, at the top of the Pie-di-Grotta."

"And I am here to see if he turns back as he did yesterday."

"What! He turned back? Does he suspect anything, then?"

"He? Poor dear sir! He would likelier believe what he refused to the other day, that the earth is a piece of the sun knocked off by a comet, than to believe that his wife deceives him; besides, she doesn't! . . . or at least not yet: she is in love with Signor Salvato, that's all; but all the same, if the chevalier were to ask for her I should be in a fix, for she is already with her invalid, whom she leaves neither night nor day."

"Ah, then she told you to come and make sure that the chevalier kept on his way to-day to the palace?"

"Oh! no; thank God! Madame is not quite so far gone; but it will come to that, you'll see. No, I saw her uneasy, coming and going, looking towards the corridor and towards the garden, dying to post herself at the window and not daring to. So I said: 'Will not madame go and see if M. Salvato needs her, since she left him at two o'clock this morning?'"

"'I dare not, my dear Nina,' she replied. 'I am afraid that my husband may forget something, as he did yesterday, and you know that Dr. Cirillo said it was of the utmost importance that my husband should not know of the young man's being at Princess Fusco's house.' 'Oh, don't let that disturb you,' I answered; 'I can keep an eye on the street, and if by chance the chevalier comes back, as soon as I see him coming I will run and tell madame; it will be good for me—I want some air.' And here I am doing sentinel at this door, where I have the pleasure of a talk with you while madame enjoys talking with her invalid."

Michael was surprised at something bitter in the words and harsh in the voice of the young girl.

"And what of the young man?" he asked. "Is he in love with her?"

"He; I should think so! He devours her with his

eyes. Directly she leaves the room they close as if he need see nothing more, not even the daylight. It was no use Dr. Cirillo—who is against husbands knowing that their wives are nursing handsome wounded young men—to forbid him to speak, saying: that if he does he risks rupturing something in his lungs—he is not obeyed on *that* head. Hardly are they alone than they begin talking without a moment's pause, and in English or French. The chevalier is a prudent man," added Nina with a little jerky laugh: "He has taught his wife two foreign languages so that she can freely discuss her affairs with strangers, and so that the household shouldn't understand."

"I had come to see Luisa," said Michael, "but after what you tell me, I should probably be in her way." And he made as if to go.

"No, no, stay, Michael; last time you came she scolded me for letting you go away without seeing her: it seems that the wounded man also desires to thank you."

"Well, upon my word, I shan't be sorry to give him *my* compliments: he is a fine fellow, and the butcher has learned the weight of his arm."

"Come in then, and as there is no danger now of the chevalier's return, I am going to tell madame you are here." And the two young people disappeared into the garden to re-appear presently at the top of the steps, and vanish once more into the house.

As Nina had stated, her mistress had gone into the wounded man's room nearly half-an-hour previously. From seven in the morning, when she arose, to ten o'clock, when her husband left the house, although Luisa never ceased thinking of the invalid for a moment she did not dare go near him, this interval being entirely devoted to those household cares which we have seen her neglecting the day of Cirillo's visit and which she thought it imprudent not to resume since. To make up for that, she did not leave Salvato for a minute from ten in the morning till two in the afternoon, the time at which her husband was accustomed

to return. After dinner, towards four o'clock, the Chevalier passed into his study and remained there an hour or two.

For at least an hour, Luisa at peace, and on the pretext of making some change in her dress was supposed to be also in her room, but, light as a bird, she was always in the corridor, and managed to pay two or three visits to the wounded man, at each visit exhorting him to rest and quietness. Then from seven o'clock till ten, the time for visits or a promenade, she again left Salvato who remained in Nina's care, but whom she used to visit again about eleven, that is directly her husband went to his room. She stayed at Salvato's bedside till two in the morning, at two she went to her own apartment, whence she did not emerge again till seven as we have said.

Everything had gone on like this without the least variation since Dr. Cirillo's first visit, that is for nine days.

Although Salvato awaited with ever fresh impatience the moment when Luisa would re-appear, to-day, with his eyes on the clock, he seemed to be watching for her return more impatiently than ever. Light as was his fair visitor's footfall, his eye was so attuned to it, and especially to the way in which Luisa opened the door of communication, that at the first creak and the first sound of a certain satin slipper, a smile, fled since her departure, returned to his lips, and his eyes turned towards that door and remained fixed, as the needle of a compass points to the North star.

At last Luisa appeared.

"Oh, you are here," he said, "thank God, to-day as usual, and at the usual hour!"

"Yes, thanks to our good Nina, who, of her own accord, offered to go down and watch at the door. How have you passed the night?"

"Very well! Only, tell me"

Salvato took both her hands as she stood by his bedside, and, raising himself to be nearer her, looked at her earnestly.

Luisa, surprised and ignorant of what he was going to ask, returned his look. There was nothing in it to make her lower her own; his gaze was tender but more questioning than passionate.

"What do you want me to tell you?" she asked.

"You left my room yesterday at two o'clock in the morning, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Did you come back into it?"

"No."

"You are certain?"

"Sure."

"Then," said the young man, speaking to himself, "it is she."

"Who? She?" enquired Luisa, more astonished than ever.

"My mother," replied Salvato, into whose eyes came a dreamy expression, and whose head fell on his chest with a sigh neither painful nor over-sad.

At these words: "My mother," Luisa shuddered.

"But," she queried, "your mother is dead?"

"Have you not heard, dear Luisa," returned Salvato, with the same dreamy expression, "that there are certain privileged people without any exterior signs of it, and who cannot themselves account for it, who possess the faculty of communicating with the spirits of the dead?"

"I have sometimes heard the Chevalier San Felice argue the point with German savants who advanced these communications between earthly beings and those of a higher order as proofs of the immortality of the soul. They called these people seers, these intermediaries, mediums."

"Without your being aware of it, to a woman's grace you unite the education of a learned man and the knowledge of a philosopher," said Salvato. "So one can discuss everything with you, even the supernatural."

"Then," said she, "you believe that last night——"

"I believe that last night my mother came into my room and leaned over my bed."

"But, dear friend," asked Luisa, shivering, "how do you explain the apparition of a soul parted from its body?"

"Some things cannot be explained, you well know. I am relating one of those mysteries."

"Friend," said she, "sometimes you terrify me."

The young man, pressing her hand, cast on her his most gentle look. "How can I terrify you. I who would give you the life you have preserved to me?"

"It is because," she answered, "you sometimes seem to be not quite of this world."

But at this moment there was a tap at the half-open door.

"Do you want to see me, little sister," said Michael, putting his head in.

She slowly withdrew her gaze from Salvato.

"Yes, come in," she said, "and see how well our patient is getting on."

Michael approached the bed on tip-toe, and Salvato immediately recognizing him held out his hand, which Michael turned over and examined.

"See, little sister," said he, "it looks like a woman's, and to think that with it he gave the butcher that famous sword-stroke! And you should have seen Luisa," he went on to Salvato, "when she heard the pistol shots, and the swords clashing, when she saw that I, a man, and a fearless one, dared not go to your aid because you had to do with the Queen's assassins. 'Then I must save him,' she cried, and darted into the garden. Oh, if you had only seen her, Your Excellency, she did not run, she flew."

"What is the good of telling him this?" cried Luisa, and shuddering at the recollection of that night, she hid her crimson face and her eyes brimming with tears in her hands. "You are well named 'Michael the Fool.'" she murmured, "I was wrong to scold Nina for sending you away."

"Your hand, Luisa, your hand," begged the wounded man, "I did not know that you, a stranger to me, saved

me from royal assassins. You weep, do you then regret having saved my life?"

Madame San Felice, exhausted by conflicting sensations, leaned her head on the back of the chair, closed her eyes and let fall her quivering hand into the young man's.

Salvato eagerly seized it; Luisa sighed, this sigh was a confession.

Giovannina, half concealed by the window curtains, understood what was passing in her mistress's heart; and so rooted to the spot she stood, with clenched hands, and stony gaze, like a statue of jealousy, that she did not hear a loud ringing till Michael said:

"Are you asleep, Nina, they will pull the bell down."

"Yes, go, to the house door," said Luisa, and in a rapid low tone to Salvato: "It is not my husband, he always comes in by the garden. Go quick, Nina; you understand, I am not at home."

"Quick, not at home, do you hear, Nina?" called Michael after her.

She went out without replying, and returning in a few minutes, and approaching her mistress mysteriously, said, in a low tone of voice, that M. Andrew Baker asked to speak with her, "and I hesitated to say you were not at home," she added, "because I know he is your banker, and because he said he came on important business."

"Important business concerns my husband, not me."

"Precisely, madame, but he might tell the Chevalier that he had called and had not found you in."

Luisa reflected for a moment, and turning to Salvato, "Be easy, I shall soon return," said she. The two exchanged a handshake, smiling, Luisa rose and went out. Hardly had the door shut behind her than Salvato closed his eyes, as he always did when she was no longer there.

Michael, thinking he wished to sleep, approached Nina. "What was it?" he whispered with that unrestrained naïf curiosity of the primitive.

Nina, raising her voice so that Salvato could hear,

answered: "It's that rich, elegant young banker; you know him, M. Andrew Baker, that good-looking, fair boy, an Englishman who paid court to madame before her marriage."

"Ah, yes; Luisa's whole fortune is in his bank, is it not?"

"Exactly," said Nina; and by the almost imperceptible quivering in the wounded man's face, she knew that he had not lost a word of what she had said.

Meanwhile, Luisa had gone into the reception room where Andrew Baker was awaiting her, and for a moment she had difficulty in recognizing him; he was in Court dress, had shaved off his long, fair English whiskers, an adornment detested by King Ferdinand, he wore the Cross of a Commander of Saint Georges-Constantinien, and the badge on his coat; he had knee breeches and he carried a sword. Luisa smiled slightly at such a costume at half-past eleven in the morning.

"Oh, my dear M. Andrew," said Luisa, having glanced at him, and having received a respectful bow, "how splendid you are! I don't wonder you wanted me to have the pleasure of seeing you in all your glory, for I presume that it is not for a matter of business you have put on Court dress!"

"Had I thought, madame, that it would give you more pleasure to see me thus than in my ordinary attire, I should not have waited till to-day to assume it; but I know that on the contrary you are one of those intelligent women who, while always choosing the most becoming dress themselves, pay little attention to what others are wearing. My visit is the result of my wishes, but my costume the result of circumstances. Three days ago the King deigned to make me a Commander of the Order of Saint Georges-Constantinien, and to invite me to dine at Caserta to-day."

Luisa's expression of surprise was not very flattering.

"You are rightly astonished, madame," replied the young man, a little piqued, "but have you not heard how one day Louis XIV., aristocrat as he was, invited the banker, Samuel Bernard, from whom he wanted to

borrow twenty-five millions, to dine with him at Versailles? Well, it seems that King Ferdinand has as great a need as that ancestor of his, and as my father is the Samuel Bernard of Naples the King invites his son, Andrew Baker, to dine with him at Caserta, his Versailles, and, as he wishes to be sure that the twenty-five millions will not escape him, he has put round the neck of the poor wretch he admits to his table, this halter by which he hopes to lead him to his treasury."

"You are a sensible man, M. Andrew. I observed it not for the first time to-day, if good sense sufficed to open the doors of Royal Palaces, you might be invited to table with all the kings on earth. You have compared your father to Samuel Bernard, I, who am acquainted with his unassailable probity and his liberality in business, accept the comparison. Samuel Bernard was a noble-hearted man, who rendered great service to France, not only under Louis XIV., but under Louis XV. But why do you gaze at me thus?"

"I admire you, madame."

"Why?"

"Because I think you are probably the only woman in Naples who knows who Samuel Bernard was, and who has the gift of complimenting one who is the first to recognize that, for a simple visit, he is presenting himself to you in a ridiculous get up."

"You embarrass me, but may I ask if there is a new road then, through Mergellina to Caserta?"

"No, but not being due at Caserta till two o'clock, I believed I should have time to speak to you about a matter precisely in connection with the expedition."

"You would not, I trust, dear M. Andrew, exert your influence to have me made a Lady-in-Waiting to the Queen? That, I warn you, I should decline in advance."

"Ah, madame, devoted to the Royal Family as I am, there are certain pure souls who must remain aloof from a certain atmosphere . . . as the healthy should avoid the miasmas of the Pontine Marshes. No, but our house is negotiating great affairs with the King, who

does us the honour of borrowing twenty-five millions guaranteed by England; it is a safe undertaking, in which the money invested can bring in seven or eight instead of four or five per cent.; you have a half-million to your credit with us; we are going to be asked immediately for coupons for this loan of which our house personally takes up eight millions. I have come to enquire, before we make the matter public, if you would like us to include you."

"Dear M. Baker, I am extremely obliged to you," replied Luisa, "but you know that money matters are the Chevalier's business only; and that (you know his habits) the Chevalier is probably talking from the top of his ladder to His Royal Highness the Prince of Calabria, so that you should have gone to the palace library if you wanted to meet him, besides, there, in the presence of the heir-apparent, your costume would have been infinitely more in place."

"You are cruel, madame."

"I believe," went on Luisa in a naïve tone, "that the Chevalier has invited you to our Thursday evenings from six to ten. If he forgot, I hasten to supply the omission; if you forgot, I remind you."

"Madame," stammered Andrew, "had you wished it you could have made very happy one who loved you, and who is obliged merely to adore you."

Luisa, with her calm and limpid eyes upon him, advanced, holding out her hand, said:

"Sir, you did me the honour to ask from Luisa Molina the hand that Madame San Felice offers you. If I were to allow you a title other than that of friend you would be deceived in me, and applying to a woman who would have been unworthy of you. It is not a moment's caprice which makes me prefer to you the Chevalier who is nearly thrice my age, and twice yours; it is the deep feeling of filial gratitude which I vowed to him; he is still for me to-day what he was two years ago; remain for your part what the Chevalier, who esteems you, offered, that is, my friend; and prove to me that you are worthy of this friendship in never

reminding me of an occasion on which, by a refusal which, however, had nothing offensive in it, I was obliged to wound a noble heart which should cherish neither rancour nor hope." Then, bowing with great dignity, "The Chevalier will have the honour of calling upon your father to give him his reply."

"If you will neither permit one to love or to adore you," replied the young man, "at least you cannot prevent one's admiration." And, bowing in his turn with the most profound respect, he withdrew, stifling a sigh.

As for Luisa, without a thought of her inconsistency, hardly had she heard the street door shut on Andrew Baker than she flew, like a bird returning to its nest, to the bedside of the wounded man.

Salvato was very pale, his eyes were closed and his marble-like countenance wore an expression of suffering.

"Are you asleep, my friend," she asked in French, in a voice whose anxiety there was no mistaking, "or have you fainted?"

"Neither, calm yourself, madame," said Salvato, half opening his eyes but not looking at her.

"Madame!" repeated Luisa, astonished. "Madame!"

"But I suffer," the young man went on.

"From what?"

"From my wound."

"No," said Luisa, "I have studied your countenance more carefully. You are suffering from a moral pain, and you must tell me the cause immediately, I insist. I have a right to know. Hasn't the doctor told me to spare you every emotion?"

"Well, then, since you insist," replied Salvato, gazing at her fixedly, "I am jealous."

"Jealous! Of whom, in Heaven's name?"

"Of you. Yes. How is it that you remained away half-an-hour when you were to stay only a few minutes? And what is this M. Baker to you that he is privileged to rob me of half-an-hour of your presence?"

An expression of heavenly happiness came into the

young woman's face. Salvato also, without uttering the word love had just told her that he loved her. She lowered her head towards his so that her hair almost touched his face, fanned with her breath, and beneath her gaze.

"Child!" said she with that melody in the voice which arises from the deepest fibres of the heart. "What is he? What did he come for? Why did he stay so long? I am going to tell you."

"No, no, no," murmured the wounded man, "no, I do not need to know; thanks, thanks."

"For what? Why thanks?"

"Because your eyes have told me all, my beloved. Your hand! Your hand!"

Luisa gave her hand to Salvato, who set his lips convulsively to it, whilst on it he let fall a tear.

Without considering what she was doing, Luisa carried her hand to her lips and drank this tear.

King Ferdinand had invited Andrew Baker to dine at Caserta, first because he found, doubtless, that receiving a banker at his table was of less importance in the country than in town, and further because he had received from England and Rome some precious consignments of which we shall speak later. He had therefore hastenend over the sale of his fish at Mergellina, a sale which in spite of this haste was accomplished, let us add, to the greatest satisfaction of his pride and purse.

Caserta, the Neapolitan Versailles as we have called it, is, indeed, a building in the frigid and heavy taste of the middle of the xviiiith century. Neapolitans who have not travelled in France contend that Caserta is finer than Versailles; those who have, content themselves with saying that Caserta is as fine; finally, uninfatuated travellers, without putting Versailles very high, put Caserta much below Versailles; which is also our own opinion, and we are not afraid of being contradicted by people of taste.

But for a week Caserta had contained treasures worthy of bringing from the four quarters of the globe

amateurs of statuary, painting, and even of natural history.

Ferdinand had just had brought from Rome and installed there, the artistic inheritance of his ancestor Pope Paul III., he who excommunicated Henry VIII., who signed a league against the Turks with Charles V. and Venice, and who took up again the building of St. Peter's, confiding it to Michael Angelo.

But while the masterpieces of the Greek chisel and the brush of the Middle Ages were arriving from Rome, another consignment was coming from England which was engaging the curiosity of His Majesty the King of the Two Sicilies far otherwise.

It was primarily an ethnological museum gathered together in the Sandwich Isles by the expedition which succeeded that in which Captain Cook had perished, and eighteen live kangaroos, male and female, brought from New Zealand, in expectation of which Ferdinand had had prepared, in the middle of the park of Caserta, a magnificent enclosure with sheds. These interesting marsupials had just come out of their cages and King Ferdinand was in astonishment at the immense leaps they were making, frightened as they were at Jupiter's barking, when the arrival of M. Andrew Baker was announced.

"Good," said the King, "bring him here, I am going to show him something he has never seen, and that, with all his millions, he won't be able to buy." And the King, perceiving the young man in the distance, took some steps in his direction. He knew the father and son only as the leading bankers of Naples. It was Corradino who was transacting the loan with them and who had suggested flattering their pride with the Cross of St. Georges Constantinien. This had, naturally, been offered first to the head of the firm, Simon Baker, but he, worthy man, had put forward his son who had been named a Commander of the Order in his stead.

We have seen that Andrew Baker had a good appearance, good sense and was a man of education. He

approached the King, then, with much circumspection and deference, but with far less embarrassment than an hour previously he had accosted Madame San Felice; and the salutations made, he waited for Ferdinand to address him.

The King examined him from head to foot and made a slight grimace. Though Andrew Baker had no whiskers or moustache, neither had he powder or queue, signs of soundness in the King's estimation. But as he greatly held to getting his twenty-five millions he said graciously to the young man: "Well, M. Baker, how goes our negotiation?"

"I believe, sire, that the matter is arranged. The King's wishes are orders. To-morrow the payment to our firm of the various houses taking shares in the loan will commence."

"And how much does your firm personally lend?"

"Eight millions, sire, which are from this moment at your Majesty's disposal."

"At my disposal, when?"

"To-morrow, or this evening on a simple receipt from your Minister of Finance."

"Would not mine do as well?"

"Better, sire, but I did not hope that the King would do our firm the honour of giving a receipt in his own hand."

"Yes, indeed, yes, and with great pleasure . . . ! So you say that this evening . . . ? As I should be sorry, my dear M. Baker, that it should be known that I have had this money," said the King, scratching his ear, "seeing that it is destined to surprise people, I should like it to be conveyed to the palace to-night."

"It shall be done, sire, only, as the bank closes at six, in that case I ought, if Your Majesty permits, to send an express to my father. Two pencilled words to my footman will suffice."

"It will be simpler to send your carriage back, I shall return to Naples at about seven o'clock, and will take you with me."

"Sire, this will be an honour indeed for a poor

banker," said the young man, bowing, and, tearing a leaf from his note-book, he wrote several pencilled lines, and turning to the King,

"Does Your Majesty permit me to give an order to this man?" said he, indicating the footman who had brought him to the King.

"Certainly, certainly."

"My friend," said Andrew Baker, "you are to give the paper to my coachman, who is to set off immediately to Naples, and to give it to my father. The carriage need not return. His Majesty is doing me the honour of bringing me," and at these words he bowed respectfully to the King.

"If this youth wore powder and a queue," mused Ferdinand, "well, one can't have everything," and aloud:

"Come, M. Baker, and I will show you some animals you don't know, to a certainty;" and he led him straight to the enclosure.

"Ah!" said Andrew, "kangaroos."

"You recognise them?" cried the King.

"Sire, I have shot hundreds."

"Where?"

"In Australia."

"And what the devil were you doing there?"

"When I left the University of Jena, my good father sent me to England to finish my education, and afterwards consented to my going round the world with Captain Flinders. The voyage lasted three years, and he having discovered some islands off the southern coast of New Holland named them Kangaroo Isles, on account of the enormous number of those animals there. I shot some each day and kept every man aboard supplied with fresh meat."

"Ah, ah," said the King, who knew nothing of geography, "but Hamilton has not deceived me in saying that the kangaroo is a rare animal, I hope, or I shall regret my papyri. They were found at Herculaneum. Hamilton, an amateur of that sort of old rubbish, saw them; he spoke of the kangaroos, and I told him I

wanted to try and acclimatise some. So he asked me if I would give the London Museum as many rolls of papyrus as the Zoological Gardens there would give me kangaroos. I said, 'Bring over the kangaroos as quick as you can!' Yesterday eighteen arrived, and I have given him eighteen papyri."

"Sir William has not made a bad bargain," said Baker, smiling, "perhaps he has got Tacitus's panegyric on Virginius, his speech against the pro-consul Marcus-Priscus, or his last poems, an irreparable loss."

"Irreparable! It is to hoped that now I have made such a sacrifice for them my kangaroos will breed! What do you think, M. Baker?"

"I greatly doubt it, sire."

"The devil! But come and see Sir William Hamilton's Polynesian Museum; come, it is very curious, and I have only given for it some old urns of broken earthenware." The King moved on towards the palace. Baker followed him. Sir William Hamilton's Museum surprised him no more than the kangaroos had done; for in his voyage with Flinders he had put into the Sandwich Isles and he could show the King the use of each weapon and the object of each instrument.

He enquired which were the old pots given in exchange for these curiosities of a dealer in bric-a-brac, and was shown five or six magnificent Greek urns, found in the excavations of Sant' Agata-dei-Goti. He uttered an artist's sigh, he would have given 100,000 francs for those old broken pots as Ferdinand called them, and would not have given ten ducats for the tomahawks, and bows and arrows collected in the kingdom of His Majesty Kamehameha I.

The King, tolerably disappointed at his guest's small admiration for the kangaroos and the Sandwich Islands Museum, expected to make up for it over his statues and pictures, and indeed, the young banker here displayed much admiration. During his frequent journeys to Rome, great amateur of the fine arts as he

was, he had visited the Farnese Museum, so that it was he who did the honours of the King's splendid inheritance, citing the probable artists and schools, relating the story of Dircé, quite unknown to the King, and helping him to decipher inscriptions.

Among the pictures, he pointed out the masterpieces of Titian, he turned over the leaves with him of a manuscript masterpiece of the XVI. century, and, in short, he astonished Ferdinand, who, thinking to find in him a kind of ignorant and vain Turcaret, was discovering, on the contrary, a learned and courteous amateur of art.

The result of this was that, as at bottom Ferdinand was a prince of great good sense, instead of disliking the young banker for being a learned man, when he, the King, as he himself said, was but an ass, he presented him to the Queen, to Acton, to Sir William, to Emma Hamilton, no longer with the questionable consideration given to the moneyed man, but with that courteous protection always accorded by intelligent princes to men of mind and education.

This presentation gave Andrew Baker occasion to turn to account new studies. He spoke German with the Queen, English with Sir William and Lady Hamilton, French with Acton, and in the midst of it all behaved so modestly and becomingly, that, when entering his carriage to take him back to Naples, the King said to him :

“M. Baker, had you retained your carriage, I should, none the less, have brought you back in mine, were it only to procure longer for myself the pleasure of your conversation.”

CHAPTER X

THE ACROSTIC

SCARCELY had the King left, taking with him Andrew Baker, than Queen Caroline, who, till then, had been unable to speak to Acton, rose, made him a sign to follow her, and charging Emma and Sir William to do the honours should any of the guests arrive before her return, went into her cabinet. Acton entered behind her.

She sat down and motioned him to do so.

"Well?" she asked.

"Your Majesty is probably questioning me about the letter?"

"I am. Did you not receive two notes from me asking you to experiment? I feel as if surrounded with daggers and plots, and I am in a hurry to get to the bottom of this affair."

"As I promised Your Majesty, I succeeded in removing the blood, and the writing has become clear enough for me to read it with a magnifying glass."

"And you have read it?"

"Yes, madame."

"Let us see the result," said she.

Acton handed to Caroline the letter he had received from her on the night of the 22nd September. The blood had, in fact, disappeared, but wherever it had been, the ink left such faint traces, that, at first sight, the Queen cried:

"It is impossible to read it, sir."

"Yes, indeed, madame," replied he, "but with a

magnifying glass and a little imagination Your Majesty will find that we shall reconstruct the entire letter," and he handed her a glass.

The Queen had been right; for with the naked eye, by the light of two wax candles, this was all one could read of the letter :

" Dear Nicolino,

" Excuse your poor friend for being unable to go to the *rendez-vous* where she was expecting so much happiness; it was no fault of mine, I swear to you; it was only after seeing you that I was notified by the Queen must readiness with the other Court meet Admiral him nificantly, and the Queen to him ll her glory; she me that I was on with she counted on dazzling of the Nile. an operation less him anyone else, since he has on e jealous: I shall always lo phemus.

" After to a word tell you the ay when I free.

" Your and faithful

" E.

21st September, 1798."

Although the Queen held the glass in her hand she tried at first to do without it; but, impatient as she was, she quickly tired; and, putting her eye to the glass, she soon succeeded in reading with some difficulty, and finally made out the following lines, giving the letter in entirety :

" Dear Nicolino,

" Excuse your poor friend for being unable to go to the *rendez-vous* where she was expecting so much happiness; it was no fault of mine, I swear to you; it was only after seeing you that I was notified by the

Queen that I must hold myself in readiness with the other ladies of the Court to meet Admiral Nelson. They will fête him magnificently, and the Queen desires to show herself to him in all her glory; she has done me the honour to tell me that I was one of the sunbeams with which she counted on dazzling the victor of the Nile. It will be an operation less meritorious on him than on anyone else, since he has only one eye; do not be jealous: I shall always love Acis better than Polyphemus.

“After to-morrow a word from me will tell you the day when I shall be free.

“Your tender and faithful

“E.

“21st September, 1798.”

“Hum,” said the Queen when she had read it, “all that doesn’t tell us much, General. The lady has taken her precautions.”

“But not enough,” returned Acton, “for this very evening we shall know what to think of her.”

“How so?”

“Has Your Majesty been good enough to invite this evening to Caserta, all the ladies of the Court whose baptismal names begin with an ‘E,’ and who had the honour of composing your train at the meeting with Lord Nelson?”

“Yes, there are seven.”

“Which, please madame?”

“Princess Cariati, who is called *Emilie*; Countess San Marco, who is called *Eleonora*; the Marchioness San-Clemente, who is called *Elena*; the Duchess of Termoli, who is called *Elizabetta*; the Duchess of Tursi, who is called *Elisa*; the Marchioness of Altavilla, who is called *Eufrasia*, and the Countess Policastro, who is called *Eugenia*. I do not include Lady Hamilton, who is called Emma; she would have nothing to do with such an affair. So you see we have seven people compromised.”

"Yes, but of these seven," replied Acton, smiling, "there are two no longer of an age to sign with initials only."

"True! That leaves five. And then?"

"Then, it is quite simple, madame, and I do not understand why Your Majesty troubles to listen to the remainder of my scheme."

"Oh, my dear Acton! On some days I am really stupid, and this must be one of them. But go on, you make me impatient with all your circumlocutions."

"Alas, madame, one is not a diplomatist for nothing."

"Well, let's get on."

"I can say it in two words."

"Say them, then," cried the impatient Queen.

"Let Your Majesty find a means for putting a pen in the hand of each of these ladies, and, in comparing the handwritings"

"You are right," the Queen said, laying her hand on his; "we shall soon discover the lover when we have found the mistress. Let us return." And she rose.

"With Your Majesty's permission, I will ask ten minutes further audience."

"For matters of importance?"

"For matters of the greatest gravity."

"Speak," said the Queen, sitting down again.

"On the night on which Your Majesty gave me this letter, you will recall seeing the King's room lit up at three in the morning? Is Your Majesty aware with whom the King was conversing so late?"

"My usher told me it was with Cardinal Ruffo."

"Very well, at the end of that conversation, the King dispatched a courier."

"I did hear, certainly, a horse galloping under the archway. Who was the courier?"

"His confidential man, Ferrari."

"How do you know that?"

"My English groom, Tom, sleeps in the stables; at three o'clock in the morning he saw Ferrari, in travelling dress, come into the stable, saddle a horse himself and

set out. He told me next day when holding my stirrup."

"Well?"

"Well, madame, I asked myself to whom His Majesty would be likely to send a courier after conversing with the Cardinal, and thought it would be to his nephew the Emperor of Austria."

"The King would do that without telling me?"

"Not the King," replied Acton.

"Oh! Oh!" said Queen Caroline, frowning, "I am not Anne of Austria and M. Ruffo is not Richelieu. Let him take care!"

"I considered the matter serious."

"Are you sure Ferrari went to Vienna?"

"My doubts were soon at an end. I sent Tom along the road to learn if Ferrari had taken post horses. He left his own at Capua, telling the postmaster to take care of it, that it was from the Royal stables, and that he would take it again on his return, the night of the 3rd October, or the morning of the 4th."

"Eleven or twelve days."

"Exactly the time it takes him to go to and from Vienna."

"And after these discoveries what did you decide to do?"

"First, to inform Your Majesty; secondly, it seems to me for our war plans, for Your Majesty is still decided on war——?"

"Still. A coalition is in preparation which will drive the French out of Italy; the French driven out, my nephew, the Emperor of Austria, will get not only the provinces he held before the Treaty of Campo-Formico, but even the Roman ones. In these sorts of wars, each keeps what he has taken, one gives back only slices; let us seize then, alone, and before anyone else, the Roman states, and, in restoring Rome, which we cannot keep, to the Pope, well, we shall lay down our conditions for the remainder."

"Therefore the Queen being still decided upon war, it is important for her to know what the King, less

resolved upon it than Your Majesty, has, on the advice of Cardinal Ruffo, been able to write to the Emperor of Austria, and what the Emperor has replied."

"One thing you are aware of, General?"

"What?"

"That one can expect no favour from Ferrari. He is entirely devoted to the King, and as one is assured, incorruptible."

"Good! Philip, the father of Alexander, said there was no fortress impregnable as long as a mule laden with gold could be introduced. We shall see at how much the courier, Ferrari, will estimate his incorruptibility."

"And suppose Ferrari refuses, however much the offered sum; suppose he tells the King that the Queen and her Minister tried to seduce him; what will the King, who is becoming more and more suspicious, think?"

"Your Majesty knows that in my opinion the King has always been suspicious; but I believe there is a means to put Your Majesty and myself out of the question, namely, for Sir William to approach Ferrari. If Ferrari is purchasable, he will take Sir William's money as easily as ours, and the more that, as the English Ambassador, he has the pretext to advance of desiring to instruct his Court on the real intentions of the Emperor of Austria. If Ferrari accepts,—and he runs no risk in doing so, for one merely asks to read the letter, return it to its envelope and seal it up again— if he accepts, all goes well; if, on the contrary, he is sufficiently his own enemy to refuse, Sir William will give him a hundred louis to keep secret the offer made; finally, at the worst, if he refuses the hundred louis and does not keep the secret, Sir William puts off all that the attempt has of—shall I say—of hazard, on the great friendship he bears his foster brother, King George; if this doesn't suffice, he will ask the King, on his honour, if, in a like case, he would not do as much as he, Sir William. The King will begin to laugh and there the matter will end. To sum up, the King needs

Sir William Hamilton too much in the position he is in, to be angry with him for long."

"You believe that Sir William will consent . . . ?"

"I will speak to him about it, and if that isn't enough Your Majesty will make his wife speak to him."

"And now are you not afraid that Ferrari will pass by without our knowing it?"

"Nothing is simpler than to provide for this fear, and I merely await Your Majesty's consent, not desiring to do anything without your order."

"Go on."

"Ferrari will again pass this night or to-morrow morning at the posting station at Capua where he left his horse; I send my secretary there that Ferrari may be informed that the King is at Caserta and awaits his dispatches there; we stay here to-night and all day to-morrow; instead of passing by the castle, Ferrari enters, asks for His Majesty and finds Sir William."

"All that may succeed, indeed," replied the Queen, anxiously, "as it may all fall through."

"But it is much, madame, when one fights with equal chances, and being woman and Queen has fortune on one's side."

"You are right, Acton. Besides, in any case, one must allow for a fire; if the fire doesn't seize everything, so much the better; if it does, well, one must try to put it out. Send your secretary to Capua, and inform Sir William Hamilton."

And the Queen, shaking her still lovely head, laden with care, as if to shake off the thousand pre-occupations weighing upon her, returned to the reception room with a light step, and a smile upon her lips.

Some of the guests had already arrived, and among them the seven ladies whose baptismal names began with an "E." Among the men were Admiral Nelson with two of his officers, or rather two of his friends, Captain Troubridge and Captain Ball, and others were the elegant Duke of Rocca-Romana, brother of Nicolino Caracciolo, who was far from suspecting—we speak of

Nicolino—that a Minister and a Queen would be taking such trouble to discover his joyous and careless personality; the Duke of Avalos, more usually called the Marquis of Vasto, whose ancient family divided in two branches, and of whom an ancestor, one of Charles V.'s captains, who had been taken prisoner at Ravenna, who had married the famous Vittoria Colonna, and composed for her in prison his *Dialogue de l'amour*, received at Pavia, from the hands of the vanquished Francis I., his sword, of which only the hilt remained; whilst the other, under the name of the Marquis del Guasto, became the lover of Margaret of France and fell assassinated; the Duke of Salandra, the King's Master of the Hounds, Prince Pignatelli, and several more besides descended, from the noblest Neapolitan and Spanish families. All were awaiting the arrival of the Queen, and bowed respectfully as she came in. Two things were pre-occupying Caroline: She had to use Emma Hamilton to make Nelson more infatuated than ever, and to recognise by her handwriting the lady who had penned the note, in the hope that once that lady was known it would not be difficult to discover the man to whom it was addressed.

Only those who were present at these intimate and intoxicating evenings of the Queen of Naples, evenings of which Emma Hamilton was both the great charm and principal ornament, have been able to relate to their contemporaries to what a point of enthusiasm and delirium the modern Armida brought her hearers and spectators. If her magical poses, if her voluptuous pantomime had had the influence we have mentioned on cold Northern temperaments, how far more they were likely to electrify those violent Southern imaginations passionately fond of singing, music and poetry, and knowing by heart Cimarosa and Metastasio!

We ourselves have known and questioned old men who were present at these magnetic evenings, and we have marked their expressions as, after the flight of fifty years, they spoke of their ardent remembrances.

Emma Hamilton was lovely, involuntarily. Let us

try to grasp what she was upon this evening when she desired to be beautiful, both for the Queen and for Nelson, in the midst of all these elegant costumes of the end of the XVIIIth century which the Courts of Austria and of the Two Sicilies persisted in wearing as a protest against the French revolution. Instead of the powder still covering those ridiculously high coiffures erected on the top of the head, instead of those scanty dresses which would have stifled the grace of Terpsichore herself, instead of that violent rouge which turned women into bacchantes; Emma Hamilton, faithful to her traditions of liberty and art, was wearing a long tunic of pale blue cashmere, falling round her in folds to make an antique statue envious; her hair, waving in long curls on to her shoulders, displayed two rubies which shone like the fabulous carbuncles of the ancients; her girdle, a gift from the Queen, was a chain of valuable diamonds, which, knotted like a Franciscan Nun's, fell to her knees; her arms were bare from the rise of the shoulder to her finger tips, and one of her arms was clasped at shoulder and wrist by two diamond serpents with ruby eyes. The hand of the arm without ornament was laden with rings, while the other, on the contrary, shone only by the brilliant fineness of the skin and tapering nails, transparently pink like rose leaves, while her feet, in flesh-coloured stockings, seemed bare as her hands in their blue sandals laced with gold.

This dazzling beauty, further increased by this strange costume had something almost supernatural, and therefore terrible and dreadful in it; women turned aside from this resurrection of Greek paganism, from jealousy, men with fear. Possession or suicide were the only alternatives for whomsoever should have the misfortune to become enamoured of that Venus Astarté. It resulted from this that Emma, lovely as she was and precisely on account of her fascinating beauty, remained isolated in the corner of a sofa, in the middle of a circle formed round her. Nelson, who alone would have had the right of seating himself at her side,

devoured her with his eyes, and reeled, dazzled, on the arm of Troubridge, asking himself by what mystery of love or political calculation, this privileged creature who united in herself every perfection, was given to him, the rough seaman, mutilated veteran of twenty battles.

"Oh, Your Majesty," cried she, when she saw the Queen appear, springing towards her as if to implore her help, "come quickly and hide me in your shadow and tell these ladies and gentlemen that, in approaching me, one does not run the same risk as in sitting beneath the upas tree."

"Do you complain of that, ungrateful being that you are!" laughed the Queen. "Why are you so lovely as to make all hearts burst with love and jealousy, inso-much that only I here am sufficiently humble, and so little the coquette as to dare approach my face to yours in kissing you on both cheeks?" And the Queen embraced her, saying in a low tone as she did so:

"Be charming this evening, it is necessary." And throwing her arm round her favourite's neck she drew her on to the sofa, around which each then pressed, the men to pay court to Emma in making court to the Queen, and the women to make court to the Queen in making court to Emma. At this moment Acton entered; the Queen exchanged a look with him intimating that everything was going as she wished.

She drew Emma into a corner, and, after having spoken to her awhile, in a low voice:

"Ladies," said she, "I have just been promised by my good Lady Hamilton that she will give us this evening a sample of all her talents, namely, that she will sing us some ballad of her country or some song of antiquity; that she will play a scene from Shakespeare for us, and that she will dance her shawl dance, which she has as yet danced for and before me only."

There was but one cry of curiosity and delight in the room.

"But," said Emma, "Your Majesty knows that it is on one condition"

"What?" enquired the ladies, still more eager in their desires than the men.

"What?" repeated the men after them.

"The Queen," said Emma, "has just remarked to me that by a singular chance, except for her own, the baptismal name of the eight ladies who are assembled in this room begin with an E."

"True!" said the ladies, looking at one another.

"Well, if I do what I am asked, I desire that what I ask should be done."

"You will agree that that is right, ladies," said the Queen.

"Well, what do you want? Let us see, tell us, milady!" cried several voices.

"I want to preserve a precious remembrance of this evening," said Emma. "Her Majesty is going to write her name, CAROLINA, on a scrap of paper, and each letter of this august and cherished name will be the initial of a line of verse written by each of us, I the first, to the greatest glory of her Majesty; each of us will sign her line, good or bad, and I expect that, mine assisting, there will be more bad than good ones; then, as a remembrance of this evening, on which I shall have had the honour of being in the company of the handsomest Queen in the world, and the most noble ladies of Naples and Sicily, I shall take this precious and poetic autograph for my album."

"Granted," said the Queen, "and heartily."

And the Queen, going to a table, wrote across a scrap of paper the name CAROLINA.

"But your Majesty," cried the ladies summoned to make verse instantly, "but we are not poets."

"You will invoke Apollo," said the Queen, "and you will become poets."

There was no possibility of withdrawing; besides, Emma, going to the table as she had said she would, wrote opposite the letter C the first line of the acrostic, and signed "Emma Hamilton." The other ladies resigned themselves, and one after the other approached

the table, took the pen, wrote a line and signed their name.

When the last, the Marchioness of San Clemente, had signed hers, the Queen eagerly took the paper. The joint action of the eight muses had given the following result.

The Queen read aloud :

○ *'est par trop abuser de la grandeur suprême,
Emma Hamilton.

▷ yant le sceptre en main, au front le diadème,
Emilia Cariatì.

℞ éunissant déjà de si riches tributs,
Eleanora san Marco.

○ Reine! de vouloir qu'en un instant Phébus,
Elizabetta Termoli.

ℓ orsque le mont Vésuve est si loin du Parnasse,
Elisa Tursi.

ℓ nitie au bel art de Pétrarque et du Tasse,
Eufrasia d'Altavilla.

ℕ os cœurs, qui n'ont jamais pour vous jusqu' à ce jour,
Eugenia de Policastro.

▷ spiré qu 'a lutter de respect et d'amour,
Elena San Clemente.

" See then," said the Queen, whilst the men were all amazement at the merits of the acrostic, and the ladies were surprised themselves at having done so well, " see then, General Acton, what a charming handwriting the Marchioness of San Clemente has."

General Acton took it, and withdrawing from the group to a candle as if he wished to re-read the acrostic, compared the writing in the letter with that of the eighth line. Then smilingly handing back the precious and terrible autograph to Caroline :

* It is taking too great an advantage of supreme greatness, wielding the sceptre and crowned with the diadem, uniting in herself already such rich attributes, O, Queen, to desire that in a moment, Phoebus, when Mount Vesuvius is so far from Parnassus, should initiate in the beautiful art of Petrarch and Tasso, our hearts, which, till this day, have never aspired but to struggle with love and respect for you.

“Charming indeed,” said he.

The double praise of the Queen and Captain General Acton with regard to the handwriting of the Marchioness San Clemente passed without anyone, even the object, attaching to it its real importance.

The Queen took possession of the acrostic, promising to return it to Emma next day, and, as the first ice was broken, everyone mingled in that charming confusion which the Queen was an adept at creating in the circle of her intimates by the art she possessed of making every embarrassment forgotten while banishing all etiquette.

Conversation became general; lips no longer let fall but let fly words; laughter displayed white teeth; men and women mingled; each to his taste sought wit or beauty; and in the midst of this gentle murmur, which seemed like the warbling of birds, one felt the atmosphere become warm and impregnated with youth, of which the breath and perfume made a kind of philtre, invisible, unseizable, intoxicating, composed of love, desires and voluptuousness.

In this kind of gathering Caroline used to forget that she was Queen; her eyes glowed, her nostrils dilated, her bosom swelled. She came to Emma, and placing her hand on her shoulder said: “Well, fair lady, have you forgotten that you do not belong to yourself this evening? You have promised us miracles, and we are in a hurry to applaud you.”

Emma seemed as if in a languorous swoon; her head drooped now on this shoulder now on that, her half-closed eyes were hidden beneath her long eyelashes; her dazzling teeth visible through opened crimson lips; her black curls strikingly contrasted with the dead white of her bosom.

She felt rather than saw the Queen’s hand on her shoulder; and quivered from head to foot.

“What do you wish of me, dear Queen?” said she, with a supremely graceful motion of the head. “I am ready to obey you. Would you like the balcony scene? But there should be two for that, and I have no Romeo.”

“No, no,” said the Queen laughing, “no love scene;

you would make them all mad. No, something to terrify them. Juliet's monologue, that is all I permit you this evening."

"So be it; give me a large white shawl, my Queen, and clear a space for me."

The Queen took from a sofa a large shawl of white China crape, which no doubt she had thrown down there purposely, gave it to Emma, and with a gesture in which she became Queen again, ordered everyone to stand aside.

In a moment Emma found herself alone in the midst of the room.

"Madame, I must ask you to be so kind as to explain the circumstances. That will distract attention from me for a moment, besides, and I need this little trick to produce my effect."

"You are all familiar with the play of Romeo and Juliet, are you not?" said the Queen. "It is desired to marry Juliet to Count Paris, whom she does not love, loving as she does poor banished Romeo. Friar Laurence, who has wedded her to her lover, has given her a sleeping draught to make her appear as if dead; she is to be laid in the tomb of the Capulets, and there Laurence will come to find her and to take her to Mantua, where Romeo is awaiting her. Her mother and her nurse have just left her room, leaving her alone, after having announced that at daybreak next day she will marry Count Paris."

Scarcely had the Queen finished this narrative, which had drawn all eyes to her, than a cry of pain made them turn again to Emma Hamilton. She had needed but a moment or two so to drape herself in the immense shawl as to leave nothing showing of her own dress; her head was hidden in her hands, which she let glide slowly down, gradually disclosing her pale face stamped with profound grief, and in which it was impossible to discover a trace of that sweet languor we have tried to depict; it displayed, on the contrary, a paroxysm of anguish; terror reaching its zenith.

She turned slowly about her as if to follow with her

gaze her mother and her nurse, even out of sight, and in a voice whose every vibration pierced hearts of the hearers, her arm extended as if to bid the world an eternal adieu :

“ Farewell ! ” said she.

“ God knows when we shall meet again.

“ I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins,

“ That almost freezes up the heat of life :

“ I'll call them back again to comfort me ;—

“ Nurse !—What should she do here ?

“ My dismal scene I needs must act alone. ”——

And so continued to the end of the scene, when, carrying the phial containing the drug to her lips, she cried :

“ Romeo, I come ! this do I drink to thee. ” And, making a gesture of swallowing it, she sank down and fell stretched on the carpet, where she remained lifeless and motionless.

So great was the illusion that, forgetting it was merely dramatic representation, Nelson, the rough sailor, more acquainted with ocean storms than with the deceits of art, uttered a cry, sprang towards Emma, and with his only arm raised her from the ground as if she had been a child.

He had his reward : on opening her eyes, Emma's first smile was for him. Only then did he comprehend his mistake and withdraw in confusion to a corner of the room.

To him succeeded the Queen, and everyone flocked round the sham Juliet.

Never did the magic of art, even if urged to this point, go beyond it. Although expressed in a foreign tongue, not a feeling agitating the heart of Juliet had escaped the spectators ; she had rendered each with such magic and such truth that she had made them pass into the souls of the listeners for whom, thanks to her, fiction had become reality.

The emotions raised by this scene of which the noble company, completely a stranger to the mysteries of the poetry of the North, had not even any idea, were some time in calming down. To the silence of stupefaction

succeeded enthusiastic applause; then the praise and charming flatteries so gently caressing to the artist's self-love.

Emma, born to shine on the scene of letters, but urged by her irresistible fortune into the scene of politics, on each occasion became once again the ardent and passionate actress.

But at this moment, when all eyes were on Emma, the Queen felt a hand grasp her wrist; she turned; it was Acton.

"Come," said he, "without a moment's delay; God is doing for us more than we could have hoped."

"Ladies," said she, "in my absence, for I am obliged to absent myself for some minutes; in my absence, Emma is Queen; I leave you, in place of power, genius and beauty."

Then, in Nelson's ear :

"Tell her to dance for you the shawl dance that she dances for me. She will do it." And she followed Acton, leaving Emma intoxicated with pride, and Nelson madly in love.

CHAPTER XI

FERRARI, THE KING'S COURIER.

THE Queen followed Acton; she understood that something serious indeed must have occurred if he permitted himself to call her so imperatively from the room. She was about to question him in the corridor, but he merely answered :

“ Do me the favour to come quickly, madame! We have not a moment to lose; you will know all in a few minutes.”

Acton took a little back staircase leading to the castle dispensary. It was here that the King's doctors and surgeons, Vairo, Troja, Cottugno had a fairly complete assortment of remedies for giving first aid to the sick or wounded in the illnesses or accidents whatever they might be for which they were summoned.

The Queen guessed whither Acton was leading her.

“ Has anything happened to one of my children ? ” she asked.

“ No, madame, re-assure yourself,” said Acton; “ and if we have any experiment to make, we shall be able to perform it at least *in anima vili*.” He opened the door; the Queen entered and cast a rapid glance round the room.

A man in a swoon was lying upon a bed.

She drew near with more curiosity than fear.

“ Ferrari ! ” said she. Then, turning towards Acton, with dilated eye. “ Is he dead ? ” she asked, in a tone as much as to say : “ Have you killed him ? ”

"No, madame," replied Acton; "he is only in a faint."

The Queen looked at him, and her look demanded an explanation.

"It is the simplest thing in the world," said he. "As we agreed, I sent my secretary to tell the master of the post at Capua that he must inform the courier Ferrari, as he passed, that the King was awaiting him at Caserta; he did so; Ferrari took only the time to change horses; but, in coming in under the great gate of the castle he turned too short, embarrassed by our guests' carriages; his horse fell, the rider's head hit against a stone, he was picked up unconscious, and I have had him brought here, saying it was useless to go in search of a doctor, and that I would attend to him myself."

"Well, then," said the Queen, grasping Acton's idea, "there is no longer need to buy his silence; we need not fear his speaking, and provided that he remains unconscious long enough for us to open the letter, read it and seal it up again, that is all we require; only, you understand, Acton, he must not wake up while we are doing it."

"I have taken my precautions. I have given this unfortunate twenty drops of laudanum, and to make sure I will give him ten more." And pouring ten drops of a yellowish liquid into a little spoon, he inserted it into the throat of the unconscious man.

"I don't see any courier's bag," said the Queen.

"Ah, the King doesn't take ordinary precautions with his confidential man; and he carries simple despatches in a leather pocket made inside his jacket."

"Let us see," said the Queen without the slightest hesitation.

Acton undid the jacket, ransacked the leather pocket and drew out a letter sealed with the private seal of the Emperor of Austria, namely, as Acton had foreseen, with a head of Marcus-Aurelius.

The Queen wished to take the letter from him to unseal it.

"Oh! no, no, not thus," said he, and he held it at a

certain height above a taper, the seal gradually melted, one of the four corners of the envelope rose.

The Queen passed a hand over her brow.

"What are we about to read?" she said.

Acton drew the letter from its envelope, and bowing presented it to her.

The Queen opened it and read aloud:—

" Castle of Schœnbrünn,
" 28th September, 1798.

" Most excellent brother, cousin and uncle, ally
and confederate,

" I reply to Your Majesty in my own hand, as you have written to me in yours.

" My advice, in agreement with that of the Aulic council, is that we should begin a campaign against France only when we have collected all our chances of success, and one of the chances on which I am permitted to rely is the co-operation of 40,000 Russians led by Field-Marshal Souvarov, to whom I intend giving the chief command of our armies; but these 40,000 men will not be here till the end of March. Temporise then, my most excellent brother, cousin and uncle, retard by every possible means the opening of hostilities; I do not think France is any more desirous of going to war than we are; profit by her peaceful intentions; give some good or bad reason for what has passed, and, in April, we will open a campaign with all our forces.

" With this, and this letter having no other aim, I beg, my very dear brother, cousin and uncle, ally and confederate, that God may have you in his holy and worthy keeping.

" FRANÇOIS."

" This is something quite unexpected," said the Queen.

" Not to me, madame," replied Acton. " I never believed that his Majesty the Emperor would begin a campaign before next spring."

" What are we to do?"

"I await your Majesty's orders."

"You are aware of my reasons for wanting an immediate war, General?"

"Does your Majesty take the responsibility?"

"What responsibility do you want me to take with such a letter?"

"The Emperor's letter will be whatever we desire."

"What are you saying?"

"Paper is a passive agent, and one makes it say what one likes. The whole question lies in the calculation: Is it better to make war immediately or later, to attack or to wait to be attacked."

"There's no need to discuss that, it seems to me; we know the state in which the French army is, it cannot resist us to-day; if we give it time to organise, it is we who will be unable to resist."

"And, with that letter, you think it impossible for the King to open a campaign?"

"He! He will be only too pleased to find a pretext for not budging from Naples."

"Then, madame, I know only one course," said Acton in resolute tones.

"What?"

"To make the letter say the contrary of what it does say."

The Queen grasped Acton's arm.

"Is it possible?" asked she, fixedly regarding him.

"Nothing is easier."

"Explain to me. . . . Wait a moment!"

"What?"

"Didn't you hear that man sigh?"

"What does it matter?"

"He raises himself."

"To fall back again; look."

And, in truth, the unfortunate Ferrari fell back on his bed moaning.

"You were saying?" continued the Queen.

"That the paper is thick, colourless, written on a single page."

"Well?"

"So one can, by using an acid, remove the writing, leaving only the three last lines and his signature in the Emperor's hand, and substitute the advice to open hostilities without delay for that of waiting till April."

"What you are proposing is a serious matter, General."

"Therefore I said it is for the Queen alone to take such a responsibility."

The Queen reflected for a moment, with wrinkled forehead, with frowning eyebrows, a hardened look and a clenched hand.

"Good," said she. "I take it."

Acton gazed at her.

"I have told you that I take it. To work!"

Acton approached the wounded man's bed, felt his pulse, and returning to the Queen said, "He will not regain consciousness for a couple of hours, and now I should like a chafing-dish, fire and a flat-iron."

"Ring then, and ask for what you require, as you are known to be here."

"But your Majesty is not known to be."

"True," said the Queen, and she concealed herself behind the window curtain.

Acton's secretary came in answer to the ring.

"Ah! it is you, Dick?" said Acton.

"Yes, milord; I thought that possibly your Excellency might require things in which a servant would be of no use."

"You are right. First get me and as soon as possible a stove, lighted charcoal and a flat-iron; and do not go out of call; I shall probably need you later."

When the young man had left the room, and Acton had closed the door after him, "Are you sure of this young man?" asked the Queen.

"As of myself, madame."

"What do you call him?"

"Richard Menden; Dick for short."

Five minutes afterwards steps were heard.

"Since it is Richard," said Acton, "your Majesty need not hide; besides, we shall need him immediately

to re-write the letter; for the King would recognise our hands at once."

"True," and the Queen seated herself with her back to the door. The young man came in with the objects asked for, and put them down near the fireplace; then he went out without seeming to have noticed that someone was in the room whom he had not previously seen.

Acton lit a fire in the little stove; and opening the medicine cupboard, brought out a little bottle of oxalic acid, cut the feather of a pen to serve as a brush for the liquid, folded the letter in such a way as to safeguard the three last lines and the imperial signature from all contact with the letter, poured the acid upon the paper and spread it with the feather of the pen.

The Queen followed these proceedings with curiosity mingled with uneasiness, afraid that it would ill-succeed or not succeed at all; but to her great satisfaction, she saw the ink first turn yellow, then white, then disappear under the biting acid.

Acton took out his handkerchief, and using it as a pad, sponged the letter. That done, the paper became perfectly blank; he took the iron, spread the letter on some sheets of paper, and ironed it as one irons linen.

"There now," said he, "while the paper dries let us compose his Majesty the Emperor of Austria's reply."

The Queen dictated it. Here is the text word for word:—

"Schœnbrünn, 28 September, 1798.

"My most excellent brother, cousin, uncle, ally and confederate,

"Nothing could please me better than your letter in which you promise me to submit yourself on every point to my advice. News which reaches me from Rome informs me that the French army is in the most complete prostration; quite as much as the army of Upper Italy.

"Undertake the one, my most excellent brother, cousin and uncle, ally and confederate; I will undertake the other. The moment I learn that you are at Rome, I, for my part, open a campaign with 140,000 men; you have 60,000, I am expecting 40,000 Russians; these are more

than required, in order that the coming treaty of peace, instead of being called the treaty of Campo-Formico, may be called the treaty of Paris."

"Will that do?" asked the Queen.

"Excellent!" said Acton.

"Then it only remains to copy."

Acton made sure that the paper was perfectly dry, ironed out the protecting fold in it, went to the door and called Dick.

The young man came at once.

"Place yourself at this table," said Acton, "and copy this rough draft on to this letter in a slightly disguised hand."

The secretary sat down without remark, and, apparently without surprise, took up the pen as if the matter were perfectly simple, did as bidden, and rose, awaiting further orders.

Acton examined the letter by the light of the candles: there was nothing to indicate the treason which had just been committed; he re-inserted the letter in its cover, held the wax over the flame again, let fall on this first stratum another in order to efface all trace of the opening of the letter, and impressed upon it the seal which he had had made in fac-simile of the Emperor's.

After which he returned the despatch to the leather pocket, buttoned up again the courier's jacket, and, taking a taper, examined the wound for the first time.

There was a bad contusion on the head, the skin was cut for about two inches, but there was no injury to the skull.

"Dick," said he; "you are to send for a doctor at Santa-Maria; while he is being found, which will take about an hour, you are to administer to this man, spoonful by spoonful, about a glassful of boiling green coffee. The doctor will think that he has been inhaling salts, or that his temples were rubbed with ether to make him come to; let him think so; he will bandage the wounded man, who will continue his way on foot or in a carriage, as he is able. The wounded man," continued Acton,

laying stress on each word, "was picked up after his fall by the house servants, carried by them at your bidding into the dispensary, tended by you and the doctor; he has seen neither me nor the Queen, neither have the Queen or I seen him. You hear?"

"Yes, Your Excellency."

"And now," said Acton, returning to the Queen, "you can let things go of themselves, and go back to the drawing-room without anxiety. All will happen as ordered."

The Queen looked once more at the secretary; then when the door had shut: "You have a valuable man in him, General," she said.

"He is not mine; he is yours, madame, as is everything I possess," and he bowed as he made way for her to pass.

When the Queen returned to the drawing-room, Emma Hamilton, wrapped in purple cashmere with gold fringes, amid the frenzied applause of the spectators, was falling back on a sofa with all the abandon of a professional dancer who has just obtained her greatest success; and truly, never did a ballet dancer of San Carlo throw her public into such intoxication, so that the moment had come when, by an imperceptible attraction, the circle round her had contracted till she had scarcely room to breathe; but at sight of the Queen the crowd opened out to let her reach Emma; and the applause redoubled. It was well known that to praise her favourite's grace, talent and magic was the surest way to pay court to Caroline.

"From what I see and hear," said the latter, "it appears to me that Emma has kept her word to you. She must now rest; besides it is one o'clock in the morning, and Caserta from Naples—my thanks that you have forgotten it—is distant several miles."

All understood this as a dismissal in due form; the Queen gave her hand to kiss to three or four of the more favoured, detained Nelson and his two friends, and calling to her the Marchioness of San Clemente: "My

dear Elena; you will be on duty with me the day after to-morrow."

"Your Majesty would say to-morrow; for, as you have observed, it is one o'clock in the morning; I prize this honour too much to allow it to be postponed for a single day."

"I am going to vex you a good deal then, my dear Elena," said the Queen with a smiling expression difficult to define; "but Countess San Marco asks my permission—with yours granted naturally—to take your place, and begs you to take hers; she has something of importance doing next week. You don't see anything inconvenient in this exchange?"

"Nothing, madame, but the postponement for a day of the happiness of paying my court."

"Well, then, it is settled; you are entirely free to-morrow, my dear Marchioness."

"I shall probably take advantage of it by going into the country with the Marquis San Clemente."

"That's right," said the Queen; "here is an example." And she saluted the Marchioness, who, detained by her, was the last to make her curtsey and leave.

The Queen was then alone with Acton, Emma, the two officers and Nelson.

"My dear lord," said she to the latter, "I have reason to think that to-morrow or the following day the King will receive from Vienna news relative to the war confirming your opinion; for you continue to hold, do you not, that the sooner one begins a campaign the better it will be."

"Not only do I think so, madame, but if this advice is taken, I am ready to lend you the support of the English fleet."

"We shall profit by it, milord; but it is not that which I have to ask of you for the instant."

"Whatever the Queen commands, I am ready to obey."

"I know, milord, how greatly the King confides in you; to-morrow, even though the reply from Vienna be

favourable to war, he will still hesitate; a letter from your lordship, in the same sense as that of the Emperor's, would remove all his irresolution."

"Should it be addressed to the King, madame?"

"No. My august consort has an invincible repugnance to follow advice given directly; I should therefore prefer it to come in a confidential letter written to Lady Hamilton. Write collectively to her and Sir William; to her as my best friend, to Sir William as the King's; coming by double rebound, the advice will influence him more."

"As Your Majesty is aware," said Nelson, "I am neither diplomat nor politician; my letter will be that of a sailor who says frankly, roughly even, what he thinks, and not anything else."

"It is all I ask of you, milord. Besides, you are going away with the Captain-General, you will talk on the way; as no doubt something important will be decided in the morning, come and dine at the palace; Baron Mack dines there, you will combine your movements."

Nelson bowed.

"We shall be by ourselves," continued the Queen. "Emma and Sir William will be with us. We must urge and press the King; I should return to Naples myself this evening if my poor Emma were not so fatigued. You know, however," added the Queen, lowering her voice, "that it is for you and for you only, my dear admiral, that she has said and done all the exquisite things you have seen and heard." Then still lower: "She obstinately declined, but I told her I was sure she would enrapture you; all her obstinacy gave way in that hope."

"Oh, madame, I entreat you!" said Emma.

"There, don't blush, and give your beautiful hand to our hero; I would give him mine willingly, but I am sure he will prefer yours; mine will be therefore for these gentlemen." And, in fact, she held out her hands to the officers, who each kissed one, while Nelson, grasping Emma's with more passion perhaps than royal etiquette permitted, carried it to his lips.

"Is it true," he asked in a low voice, "that it was for me you consented to recite, sing and go through that dance which has made me madly jealous?"

Emma gazed at him as she was accustomed when she wished to deprive her admirers of the little reason left to them; then with a tone still more intoxicating than her look: "Ungrateful being," said she; "he asks!"

"His Excellency the Captain-General's carriage," announced a footman.

"Gentlemen," said Acton, "when you are ready."

Nelson and the two officers made their bows.

"Has Your Majesty any private commands for me?" said Acton to the Queen just as they were going.

"Yes," said she; "at nine this evening the three State inquisitors in the dark room."

Acton bowed and went out; the two officers were already in the anti-chamber.

"At last!" said the Queen, throwing an arm round Emma's neck, and embracing her with the warmth which she put into all her actions; "I thought that we should never be alone! . . ."

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH THE KING WASHES HIS HANDS, AND THE QUEEN INSTRUCTS HER INQUISITORS

ONE of the great diversions at Naples, on the approach of Christmas, used to be and still is the making of crèches. — In 1798 there were few of the great houses without one of some kind, and King Ferdinand was specially renowned for his, for which he had had constructed a theatre on the ground-floor of the palace. Private cribs, according to the wealth of their owners, cost from about five to fifteen thousand francs; and the objects of which they were composed served the same purpose year after year. Ferdinand, however, used to spend on his about two or three hundred thousand francs, and after it had been on view for a couple of months it was dismantled and the precious objects bestowed upon his favourites as special marks of approbation.

The crèche for 1798 was to be more splendid than ever; it was not yet complete, and already very large sums had been spent, which, as money was needed for the war, was the reason why he had pressed for payment of the house of Baker's share in the twenty-five million loan the previous evening.

The eight millions, weighed and counted, had been, according to Andrew Baker's promise, transported during the night from the bank cellars to those of the palace. And, Ferdinand, radiant, no longer afraid of a lack of money, had sent for Cardinal Ruffo, firstly to show him the crib and ask his opinion on it, and secondly to await with him the return of Ferrari, who should have reached

Naples during the night, or at the very latest, in the morning.

Meanwhile, he was discussing the merits of Saint Ephrem with Fra Pacifico, who was to have the honour of a place in the crib, in consequence of which he and his ass Jacobino were being posed by a sculptor, who was modelling them in clay preparatory to carving them in wood. As it was impossible for Fra Pacifico to pursue his usual avocations during the sittings, the King's head cook had been charged with filling his baskets, to the great satisfaction of man and beast, who never in their wildest and most ambitious dreams had hoped for the honour of being face to face with the King.

Ferdinand was in the midst of making Fra Pacifico relate the legend—swollen to formidable proportions—of how the butcher had been attacked by a whole army of Jacobins, when the arrival of Cardinal Ruffo interrupted the recital, for the Cardinal recognised the monk and knew the abominable crime of which he had been the cause, and turned aside to examine the crib. The King did not send Fra Pacifico away empty-handed however; besides the loads of fish, vegetables, wine and meat from the royal kitchens, Ferdinand made an order to pay him a hundred ducats for each sitting, as alms, and demanded his blessing in dismissing him, and whilst the monk, a blesser worthy of the blest, with a heart bounding with pride was going away on his ass, he went to rejoin Ruffo.

“Well, Eminence,” he was saying, “there is no news of Ferrari, generally so punctual, and so I have sent for you to help me pass the time while waiting for him.”

“And you have done well, sire,” replied Ruffo, “for on crossing the courtyard I saw a horse covered with sweat taken to the stable, and in the distance a man being supported under the armpits. This man was going up to your apartment with difficulty; I thought I recognised the poor devil you expect by his jack boots, leather breeches, and laced jacket; perhaps he has had an accident.”

At this moment a footman appeared. “Sire,” said

he, "the courier, Antonio Ferrari, has arrived, and is waiting in your study that your Majesty may be pleased to receive the despatches he brings."

"Here is our reply, Eminence," said the King, and without even asking if Ferrari were hurt, Ferdinand went quickly to his room by a secret staircase, and was there with Ruffo before the courier, who delayed by his wound, could go but slowly, and was obliged to pause at each ten steps. Some moments later, the door opened and Ferrari, still supported by the two men, appeared on the threshold, pale, with his head wrapped in a blood-stained bandage.

On seeing the King, Ferrari, as if his master's presence gave him strength, took three steps forward, and whilst the men who held him up withdrew, shutting the door behind them, he pulled the despatch from his pocket and presented it to the King.

"Good," said Ferdinand for all thanks; "there's my imbecile who let himself fall; and where did it happen?"

"In the castle courtyard; the master of the post at Capua told me the King was at Caserta."

"You hear, Cardinal?" said the King. "And how did it happen?" he asked Ferrari; and when he had been informed, "Hum!" he responded, and turning over the letter as if he hesitated to open it, "Let us see what my nephew writes, Cardinal."

"If your Majesty permits," replied Ruffo, pushing forward an armchair, "the messenger had best be seated, and I will give him a glass of water, and some salts," and indeed Ferrari fell into the chair almost fainting. "Perhaps his friend Jupiter may help to revive him," added Ruffo, as whining and scratching were heard at the door, and he went to open it. The King frowned and became absorbed in the letter, while Jupiter, keeping as far from him as possible, edged towards the courier.

"Did the Emperor write this letter himself?" asked Ferdinand of Ferrari, handing it to the Cardinal.

"I do not know, sire; but it was he who gave it to me."

"And since then no one has seen it? It has not left you?"

"It was in my pocket when I fainted; and when I recovered consciousness."

"And what was done with you in the interval?"

"M. Acton's secretary carried me into the dispensary."

"Who bandaged you?"

"The doctor from Santa-Maria. I saw only him and the secretary."

"What do you think of the letter, Cardinal?" asked Ferdinand.

"It is in precise terms. The news originates from Rome the same as ours."

"The body of the letter is not in his own hand, though," returned Ferdinand suspiciously.

"No, but the concluding lines, the signature and the address are autograph, and the seal is his. One can hardly ask more. Has your Majesty any further questions for your courier?"

"No; let him get his wound attended to;" and he turned his back.

"And these are the men one dies for!" murmured Ruffo, and he rang for help for Ferrari, but the latter rose unaided, saluted, and made his way to the door alone, passing as he went out a footman come to ask for an audience for Sir William Hamilton. The King signed to the Cardinal to remain. "This visit sounds as if it were official. I shall need your help probably," he told him, and as the door re-opened to admit the English Ambassador, added: "*Zitto!*" displaying the Emperor's letter ere pocketing it. The Cardinal had barely time to make a corresponding gesture when Sir William Hamilton entered.

"Welcome, Sir William," said the King, "and all the more that I believed you at Caserta."

"The Queen has honoured Lady Hamilton and myself in bringing us back in her carriage, and having a communication to make to your Majesty——"

"Relative to the war, I presume," said the King with a glance at Ruffo.

"Exactly, sire."

"Then you may speak before his Eminence, for it was the subject we were discussing at the moment you were announced."

The two men bowed to one another, which they never did if they could avoid it.

"Well," continued Sir William, "I have here a letter addressed by Lord Nelson to Lady Hamilton and myself which I think it my duty to communicate."

"Read it; we are listening," said the King.

Here is the very text of the letter which the English Ambassador translated from English into Italian for the King:—

"To Lady Hamilton.

"Naples, 3rd October, 1798.

"My Dear Madam,

"The interest that you and Sir William Hamilton have always taken in their Sicilian Majesties, is, for the last six years, graven in my heart, and I can truly say, that on all the occasions offered, and they have been numerous, I have never ceased to show my sincere sympathy for the prosperity of this kingdom.

"In virtue of this attachment, dear Madam, I cannot remain indifferent to what has passed and is passing at this moment in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, nor to the misfortunes which, from what I see clearly without being a diplomat, are about to fall on all this loyal country, and that, through the worst of all policies, temporizing.

"Since my arrival in these waters, namely since May last, I have seen in the Sicilian people one devoted to its Sovereign, and terribly detesting the French and their principles. It has been the same during my stay at Naples; and I have found the Neapolitans there, from first to last, ready to make war on the French, who, as one knows, are organising an army of thieves to pillage this kingdom and pull down the monarchy.

"And, indeed, has not the policy of France always been to rock governments in a false security in order to destroy them afterwards? and, as I have already stated, is not one aware that Naples is the country they wish above all to deliver over to pillage? Knowing that, but knowing that his Sicilian Majesty has a powerful army, ready, I am

assured, to march on a country which invites it, with the advantage of making war besides, instead of awaiting it resolutely, I wonder that this army has not been set marching this month past.

"I have full confidence that the so fortunate arrival of General Mack will urge the government to profit by the most favourable moment that Providence has granted; for if it attacks or waits to be attacked at home, instead of carrying the war outside, it needs no prophet to predict that the kingdoms will be lost and the monarchy destroyed! But, should, unfortunately, the Neapolitan Government persist in this wretched and ruinous system of temporizing, I recommend you, my dear friends, to hold your most precious possessions and yourselves ready to be embarked at the slightest news of invasion. It is my duty to think of and to provide for your safety. I regret to think that this might also be necessary for that of the amiable Queen of Naples and her family; but it would be best that the words of the great William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, should come to the minds of the ministers of this country.

"The boldest course is the safest."

"This is the sincere desire of him who calls himself,

"Dear Madam,

"Your very humble and very devoted

"Admirer and friend,

"HORATIO NELSON."

"Is this all?" asked the King.

"Sire," replied Sir William, "there is a postscript."

"Let us see it. . . . Unless" His hesitation visibly indicated "unless the postscript is for Lady Hamilton only." So Sir William hastened to continue:

"I beg your ladyship to receive this letter as a proof, for Sir William Hamilton, to whom I write with all due respect, of the firm and unalterable opinion of an English Admiral desirous of proving his fidelity towards his sovereign in doing all in his power for the happiness of their Sicilian Majesties and of their kingdom."

"This letter deserves to be considered," said the King.

"It is the advice of a sincere friend," returned Sir William.

"And promised ally?" continued the King.

"He will fulfil his promise. Your Majesty need fear no French ship while his fleet is here, but in six weeks' time he may receive sailing orders; that is why no time should be lost."

The King and Cardinal exchanged looks, as much as to say, "They have taken their decision."

"What is your sincere advice as to war, Cardinal?" asked Ferdinand.

"I think that if both the Emperor of Austria and Nelson keep their promises, under all the circumstances it would be best to attack."

"Nelson and you urge war, do you not, Sir William?" interrogated the King.

"Nelson counsels it out of his devotion; I, as English Ambassador, seconding what I know to be my gracious sovereign's wishes."

"Cardinal," said the King; "do me the pleasure to pour some water into that basin for me."

The Cardinal obeyed without making any remark, and presented the basin to the King.

The King turned up his cuffs and washed his hands with a kind of fury.

"You see what I am doing, Sir William?" said he.

"I see, sire," replied the English Ambassador, "but I cannot quite say why."

"Well, I will explain it to you," said Ferdinand. "I am doing what Pilate did, washing my hands."

ACTON had not forgotten the Queen's command of the morning, and had summoned the State inquisitors to the dark room for nine o'clock; but to prove their zeal, and from personal uneasiness, each had come half-an-hour before the time. These three men, whose names remain in merited execration in Naples, were the Prince of Castelcicala, Guidobaldi, Vanni. The Prince, first in rank as in shame, was ambassador in London when the Queen, needing a great Neapolitan name to shield her vengeance, recalled him. From ambition and greed

he had consented to lower himself from Prince to policeman, and from ambassador to spy.

Guidobaldi, an iniquitous judge and a shuffling magistrate, without conscience, was pleased to operate on a larger scale under royal favour; but both were less feared and detested than the fiscal procurator Vanni, for a comparison for whom one must seek in the animal species among beasts of prey. There was in him something both of wolf and hyena, morally and physically. He was rather tall than short; had a sombre and concentrated expression; an ashen face; never laughed and slept little.

It was thanks to Vanni's zeal that the prisons were full of suspects, crowded into infected dungeons, deprived of air, light and bread; and there left to languish at his pleasure ignorant even of what they were accused, while he was busy in causing yet further arrests. Unlike Guidobaldi, he was reputed upright and inflexible; to limitless ambition he united limitless cruelty and enthusiasm.

He was dangerous and fatal, because he possessed an imagination which magnified the smallest actions of his own and of others. He had made his reputation over the case of the Prince of Tarsia, director of the King's silk factories, an honest man with no business ability, who became involved in his accounts. The Prince would have paid off the deficit from his private purse, and have ended the business in a couple of hours; but Vanni, having got it into his clutches, let it drag on ten years, at the end of which time the Prince was ruined both in pocket and reputation.

The Queen, who always fancied herself surrounded with plots and conspiracies, allowed Vanni to work upon her feelings and increase her fears. This white terror lasted three years. The prisons were full of persons against whom nothing had been proved, and the tide of public indignation rose high. In these circumstances, Vanni wished to resort to the tortures of the middle ages; but all the judges except Guidobaldi and Castelcicala revolted, with the result that the prisoners

were released, the tribunal dissolved in public disgust, and Vanni lost his position as fiscal attorney. It was then that the Queen came forward, made Vanni a marquis, and of these three men, who had incurred public execration, formed her private tribunal; which sat alone, and struck in the dark no longer with the axe of the executioner, but with the dagger of the *sécret* police.

We have seen Pasquale di Simone at work; let us observe Guidobaldi, Castelcicala and Vanni.

The three inquisitors, uneasy at their summons, were assembled round the green table lighted by the bronze lamp, whose shade left their faces in shadow. As they waited for the Queen, from time to time each cast an uneasy glance into the darkest corner of the room, where, almost invisible stood the police agent Pasquale. They knew that he was even more in the Queen's secrets than they were, and they feared him more than the public executioner, Master Donato; for he was the private executioner—not of the law but of the royal pleasure—and they were aware that their very knowledge of the royal secrets might become a terrible danger to them.

As the last stroke of nine sounded, the door opened and Caroline appeared; the three inquisitors rose simultaneously, but she did not leave them time to speak.

"This time, Monsieur Vanni," said she, "it is I who hold the threads of a plot; and more fortunate than you who find the guilty without the proofs, I have found the proofs first; and through them I bring you the means of finding the guilty," and she came to the table, opened her purple cashmere shawl worn like a cloak on one shoulder, parted it, and set out on the table a pair of pistols, and a letter still slightly stained with blood.

"Sit down, sirs," said she to the astonished inquisitors.

"Marquis Vanni, write to my dictation," and she remained standing, her closed fist resting on the table, and wrapped in her purple shawl like a Roman Empress, dictating as follows:—

"On the night of 22nd-23rd December last, six men

were assembled in the ruins of the Castle of Queen Joanna; they were awaiting a seventh, sent from Rome by General Championnet. This man had left his horse at Pozzuoli, had taken a boat there, and in spite of the storm which was threatening, and which later burst, he proceeded by sea to the ruins. As the boat reached the shore it foundered; the two fishermen who were rowing perished; Championnet's messenger also fell into the water, but saved himself. He and the six conspirators conferred together till about half an hour after midnight. He left first and went towards the river Chiaïa; of the other six, three went up Pausilippo, and three took a boat along the coast towards the Chateau de L'Ovo. Shortly before reaching the Lion fountain, the messenger was assassinated. Before falling he killed two men with these pistols, and wounded two with the sword which you will find in that cupboard. The sword is of French make; but the pistols are from the royal factory at Naples; they are engraved with an N., the first letter of their owner's Christian name."

Not a breath interrupted the Queen.

"The messenger," she continued, "had changed his uniform, wet from his immersion, for a coat of laced green velvet, which had been lent him by one of the six conspirators, who had left in the pocket a letter, a love letter from a woman addressed to a young man named Nicolino; the same probably who had also lent his pistols engraved with an N."

"The letter," said the Queen with a singular smile, "is from the Marchioness Elena di San Clemente, one of my ladies of honour. But, as the lovers, it would appear, are still in their honeymoon, I have this morning granted leave of absence to the Marchioness. Now, listen attentively," went on the Queen. The three inquisitors drew nearer, and into the circle of lamplight, so that their three heads were suddenly illuminated; and the Queen continued: "Most likely my *lady of honour* will not tell her husband of the leave I give her, and will devote the whole of to-morrow to her dear Nicolino; you understand now, do you not?"

The three men looked questioningly at the Queen; they had not understood. Caroline continued:

"It is, however, very simple. Pasquale di Simone surrounds the Marchioness's palace with his men; they see her come out, and follow her; the rendez-vous is in a third house; they recognise this Nicolino; and leave the lovers their leisure. Probably the Marchioness will go away first; and when Nicolino emerges in his turn, he is arrested, without injury," said the Queen, raising her voice and frowning. "Pasquale's men take him alive to the Governor of the Castle of St. Elmo, who chooses for him one of his safest cells. If he names his accomplices, well and good; if he refuses, then Vanni, it is your affair: there is no longer a stupid tribunal to prevent your administering torture, and *as upon a corpse*. Is that clear, gentlemen? And when I set out to discover conspiracies, am I a good bloodhound?"

"All that the Queen does is stamped with genius," said Vanni, bowing. "Has your Majesty any other commands?"

"No," replied the Queen. "You have your written instructions; I require a report of the first interrogatory. Take the cloak and sword in the cupboard, the pistols and this letter, and God guard you." She acknowledged their profound bows with her hand; they withdrew backwards.

When the door had shut behind them, Caroline signed to Pasquale di Simone, and as he approached the table threw upon it a purse full of gold.

"You heard?" she said; "to-morrow, come here at the same hour to report to me."

The next day Pasquale punctually informed her that the Marchioness's lover, surprised unawares, had been arrested at three o'clock in the afternoon without having been able to offer any resistance, taken to the Castle St. Elmo and incarcerated. She learned besides that this lover was Nicolino Caracciolo, brother of the Duke of Rocca Romana, and nephew of the admiral.

"Ah!" murmured she; "if we had the good fortune to find the admiral compromised!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE OPPOSING GENERALS

ON a fine autumn day a fortnight after the arrest of Nicolino Caracciolo, the population of Naples and its environs were hurrying to the approaches to the Royal Palace, all of which were guarded by troops. In the centre of the People's Square, in front of the Palace, General Mack was parading, surrounded by a most brilliant staff composed of officers of the highest rank, covered with decorations from all countries and wearing uniforms glittering with gold lace. At all the windows from which a view of the square could be obtained, women, in gala dress, beneath the white flags of the Bourbons and the red flags of England, were waving their handkerchiefs to cries of "Long live the King! Long live England! Long live Nelson! Death to the French!" which rose like the menace of a tempest from the midst of that human swell whose waves were beating against the dykes which they threatened every moment to overturn. The galloping staff in the square, the people blocking the streets, the ladies waving their handkerchiefs, the whole mass of spectators was waiting for the King who was coming to put himself at the head of his army, to take the field in person against the French.

For a week past war had been decided on; it was preached in the churches and out of doors; and Ferdinand's proclamations covered the walls. They declared that the King had done all he could to preserve friendly relations with the French, but that the honour

of Naples was outraged by the occupation of Malta, a fief of the kingdom of Sicily, that he could not tolerate the invasion of the states of the Pope, whom he loved as his ancient ally and respected as Head of the Church, and that consequently he was marching his army to restore Rome to its rightful sovereign. Then, addressing himself directly to the people, he said :

“ Had I been able to gain this advantage by any other sacrifice, I should not have hesitated to make it ; but what hope of success was there after the many melancholy examples well known to you all ? Full of confidence in the goodness of the God of armies, who will guide my steps and direct my operations, I set out at the head of the courageous defenders of the country. I go with the greatest joy to brave all dangers for love of my fellow-countrymen, my brothers and my children ; for such I have always considered you. Be faithful to God, obey the commands of my well-beloved companion whom I charge with the cares of government in my absence. I enjoin you to respect and cherish her as a mother. I also leave you my children, who should be no less dear to you than to myself. Whatever may betide, remember that you are Neapolitans, that to be brave, it suffices to will it, and that it is better to die gloriously for God and one’s country than to live in a fatal oppression. May Heaven shed her blessings upon you ! Such is the prayer of him, who, while life lasts, will preserve for you the tenderest feelings of a sovereign and father.”

This was the first time that the King of Naples had spoken directly to his people ; and since the victory of the Spaniards at Velletri in 1744 the Neapolitans had heard no cannon except on fête days. As to Ferdinand he had had no occasion for proving his courage or military talent ; and his capacities were unknown, unless to himself. But he had taken a grave step in declaring war ; even though after the letter he had received he made no doubt of the help of Austria, and also counted on a division from Piedmont.

The Neapolitans, always ready to rush to extremes,

were by this time in a state of enthusiasm bordering on delirium. They looked upon the King as a second Godefroy de Bouillon, a champion of the Church flying to the aid of demolished altars and religion profaned, an example of Christianity, the idol of Naples. Thus all who could be suspected of Jacobinism, namely, of desiring progress and instruction and of looking upon France as a civilising influence, were prudently within doors, and careful not to mingle in the crowd.

But the King, who was always so punctual at the hunt, at the theatre and at the entertainment of publicly eating his macaroni, was an hour and an half behind time and the crowd was growing impatient. This time he was engaged to play a far different game; one to which he was unused, and for which he may have doubted his skill.

At last, however, there was a greater stir, drums beat, bands played, and the palace balconies filled, in the middle one appeared the Queen, the Prince Royal, the Princess of Calabria, the Princes and Princesses of the Royal Family, Sir William and Lady Hamilton, Nelson and his officers Troubridge and Ball; and in the others all the ladies and gentlemen attached to the Court. And at the same moment, in the midst of frenzied and deafening cries, Ferdinand himself appeared on horseback with his escort, framed in the great gateway of the palace. On horseback he showed to great advantage, being one of the finest horsemen in the kingdom. As fate would have it, however, even before he had emerged from the gateway, his horse started violently, refusing to advance into the square, and reared so as to have thrown any less accomplished rider than Ferdinand. Making free use of his spurs he urged him forward with a single bound as if he had crossed some invisible obstacle; and proud of displaying his horsemanship to such an assembly, sprang into the middle of the circle of generals awaiting him; then making his horse pivot till he faced the Queen, raised his hat and saluted her. At this the thunderous acclamations on his appearance redoubled on all sides; the vessels in the harbour

dressed their flags and the cannon from the forts rent the air with salvoes of artillery.

Eleven o'clock struck. Ten o'clock should have been the hour of departure. But Ferdinand could not make an end without theatrical display.

"My children!" he cried, extending his arms towards the balcony, where were, with the young princesses, the young princes Leopold and Albert, who, hearing themselves called, left the balcony, and, escaping from their professors, sped out by the great gate, adventuring with the careless courage of youth among all the horses crowding the square, and rushed to the King.

Ferdinand lifted them, turn by turn, from the ground and embraced them. Then he showed them to the people, crying in a powerful voice, which carried far into the crowd: "My friends, I entrust them to you; they are, after the Queen, my most precious possessions," and, restoring them to their tutors, he added, drawing his sword:

"And I, I go to conquer or to die for you!"

At these words the general emotion reached its height. Tears flowed, blessings were called down from Heaven; the desired effect was produced; to remain longer would have spoiled it. The trumpets sounded the signal for departure. A small body of cavalry formed the head of the column; then came the King at a distance, alone, bowing to the people; after him, Mack and the Staff; then the main body of troops; and another small detachment of cavalry brought up the rear.

Before finally leaving the Castle square, the King turned for the last time to salute the Queen and his children. Then he was swallowed up in Toledo Street on the road to Capua, where his suite was to make its first halt, while he, at Caserta, would take his real farewells of his wife and children and pay a last visit to his kangaroos. What he regretted most was his crib, which he was leaving unfinished.

For more than a month the King of Sicily's army

had taken up its positions; it was divided into three bodies, 22,000 men under the King at San Germano; 16,000 under General Micheroux in the Abruzzi; and the third of 8,000 in the plain of Sessa; also 6,000 at Gueta, under General de Damas; while yet another 8,000 were ready to set sail for Leghorn under General Naselli. Thus, without counting these latter there were 52,000 men marching against Championnet and his 9-10,000.

After three or four days in camp at San Germano, where the Queen and Lady Hamilton reviewed the first division on horseback, and by gracious words and smiles to the officers, double pay and distribution of wine to the men, did their utmost to raise the enthusiasm of the army, the Court and the guests invited to these warlike festivities, including the Ambassadors and Nelson, returned to Caserta, while, on a concerted signal, at the same hour, the army began its march on three different objectives.

According to the orders we have seen given by General Macdonald in the name of Championnet, in the Corsini Palace, orders to abandon every position at the approach of the Neapolitans, we shall not be surprised to see the whole French army in retreat before the aggression of King Ferdinand.

General Micheroux, with a right wing of 10,000 going by the Emilian Way took the direction of Porto-de-Fermo; General de Damas's left wing took the Appian Way, and the King, leading the centre, marched on Rome by Ceperano and Frosinone.

At Ceperano the King halted for breakfast at about nine in the morning, after which General Mack, who was now honoured with a seat at the Royal table, asked permission to summon his aide-de-camp, Major Riescach, a young Austrian of good education and distinguished appearance, speaking French as his mother tongue.

"Sire," said Mack, "it is customary in war to announce one's attack to the enemy; I think it my duty to inform the Republican General that we have crossed

the frontier; besides, when he learns in what strength we are, he may yield. Does Your Majesty permit it?"

"By all means," said the King.

"Major Ulrich," said Mack, pivoting his chair on one leg, and leaning his elbow on the table, "sit down at that bureau and write in your best hand, for it is possible that the Republican General reads with difficulty, and I don't want him to say afterwards that he didn't understand."

"If it is to General Championnet, Baron," replied the young man, "you need have no fear, I believe he is one of the most literary men in the French army."

"Well, do as I tell you," replied Mack, piqued at this observation. "Does Your Majesty allow me a free hand?"

"Certainly, assuredly," replied the King, "however literary your Citizen-General, he would be puzzled to make out what I should write, I think."

"Write, sir," then said Mack, and he dictated the following ultimatum, unreported in any history, copied by us from the official duplicate sent to the Queen, and a model of impertinence and pride.

"General.

"I announce to you that the Sicilian army which I have the honour of commanding under the orders of the King in person, has just crossed the frontier to take possession of the Roman states, revolted and usurped since the peace of Campo-Formico, a revolution and usurpation which have not been recognised by His Sicilian Majesty, nor by his august ally the Emperor and King; I require therefore that without the least delay that in the cisalpine republic you order the French troops to evacuate the Roman states and all the places where they are in occupation. The Generals commanding His Sicilian Majesty's divisions have the most positive orders not to begin hostilities where the French troops retire on my notice, but to use forcè where they resist.

"I announce to you, moreover, citizen-general, that if the French troops set foot on the territory of the Grand

Duke of Tuscany, I shall consider it a hostile act. I await your reply without any delay and beg you to send back to me Major Riescach, whom I am despatching to you, four hours after having received my letter. The reply should be positive and categoric. As to the demand to evacuate the Roman states and not to set foot in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, a negative answer will be considered as a declaration of war on your part, and His Sicilian Majesty will know how to sustain, sword in hand, the just demands I address to you in his name.

“ I have the honour, etc.”

“ Has the King any observations to make?” asked Mack.

“ You sign it, do you not?” returned Ferdinand, and he shrugged his shoulders as much as to say: “ Do as you please.”

Mack signed, and dictated as address: “ Citizen-General. The title these *sansculottes* of republicans give to themselves,” he remarked; and to the young man he added: “ Carry this letter as fast as possible to the French general. Wait for his decision four hours and not a minute more. We shall continue to march.”

At half-past nine next morning the Major reached Rome by the Gate of San-Giovanni, and was given a soldier to take him to Championnet. The General had just returned from a walk round the walls, and had received at the door of the Corsini palace a letter brought by a peasant, who gave as a countersign the words Naples and Rome. This letter informed him of the convalescence of Salvato, the arrest and imprisonment of Nicolino Caraccioli and the marching orders and equipment of the Neapolitan army. Championnet was accompanied by his aide-de-camp, Thiébaud, and Éblé, a general of genius, just arrived. All three entered the palace; and Championnet gave the others the letter to read.

“ Here is food for thought,” said he. “ What do you say, Éblé?”

“ I say,” returned he, as they came into the great

gallery, "that 52,000 men and 100 cannon are a pretty figure. How many have you?"

"Nine cannon, and eleven or twelve thousand men. But we are French, and they are Neapolitans, commanded, moreover, by General Baron Mack. I think you were organising Neapolitans once, Eblé, and know something of them;" and turning to Thiébaud he continued:

"As the enemy may be here in three or four days, order the port Saint Angelo to fire the cannon; beat an alarm throughout the city, and let the garrison, under General Mathieu Maurice, assemble in the People's Square."

The aide-de-camp went to obey the order, but returned almost immediately. "General," said he, "a messenger from San-Germano with an important despatch from General Mack."

"Bring him in," replied Championnet; "we should never make our friends wait, and still less our enemies."

Major Riescach entered smiling, gracefully saluted, and presented General Mack's letter; and since he had indited the contents, followed with some anxiety the Commander-in-Chief's eyes as they passed from line to line. But at the last word Championnet smiled, and put the despatch in his pocket.

"Sir," said he, "the honourable General Mack informs me that you have four hours to spend here; I thank him for it; and shall not let you off a minute. At a quarter-past two o'clock you will be free. Thiébaud, order an extra plate; this gentleman gives us the honour of his company to luncheon, that is if he will accept luncheon from poor devils in want of everything, when he has quitted a Royal table sumptuously served?" he added, laughing.

"General," stammered the young officer, embarrassed at such politeness from the chief to one who brought him such a discourteous letter, "perhaps I am bidden to a Spartan repast, but only a Frenchman could have the courtesy to invite me to it."

The meal, though not that of a Sybarite, was not

quite that of a Spartan; it held the golden mean, thanks to the cellar of His Holiness Pius VI., the wines were of the best. As they sat down to table, three cannon shots were heard; almost at the same time the general alarm was being beaten.

"You hear, Major," said Championnet, seeing that his guest was silent. "You understand that after a letter such as General Mack has honoured me by writing . . . I presume that you are aware of the contents?"

"I wrote it."

"You write a very good hand, Major."

"But General Mack dictated it."

"General Mack has a very fine style."

"But I have not heard you give any orders," said the young man, "did your drums and cannon recognise me? Are they sorcerers?"

"They need to be, we have only nine, not too many to reply to a hundred. Another cutlet, Major?"

"With pleasure."

"No. I gave the order before I saw you; I have a familiar spirit, like Socrates, I know your numbers and dispositions. Ah, General Mack is a great strategist, all Europe knows it; but you understand that I have only 12,000 men; of whom the Directory is taking 3,000 to reinforce the garrison at Corfu . . . and à propos Thiébaud, give the order for them to embark. The Spartans were only 300, one has always sufficient to die." Thiébaud went out. "Let me give you this wing, Major, you are not eating," said Championnet; and, indeed the young man, uneasy at the General's calmness, which he began to take for a trap, was forgetting his hunger.

"Éblé," continued Championnet, "as soon as we have finished, and while with Major Riescach I review the garrison, you will go on ahead and be in readiness to blow up the bridges of Tivoli and Borghetto as soon as the French troops shall have crossed."

"Yes, General," replied Éblé simply.

The young major gazed at Championnet who passed him the wine.

“Then you abandon Rome to us?” said he.

“You are too experienced a soldier, my dear Major,” answered Championnet, “not to be aware that in 1799, under citizen Barras, one does not defend a town fortified in 274 by the Emperor Aurelian. I would risk it if General Mack were coming with Parthian arrows, Balearic slings, or even with those famous rams of Antony seventy-five feet long; but against a hundred cannon it would be madness.”

Thiébaut returned. “Your orders are carried out, General,” said he. Championnet nodded, and continued, “However, I shall not entirely abandon Rome; no, Thiébaut will shut himself up in the Castle of St. Angelo with five hundred men—won’t you, Thiébaut?”

“If you order me, General, certainly.”

“And you will give it up under no pretext.”

“Under no pretext, you can be easy.”

“You will choose your men yourself; you will easily find five hundred to die for the honour of France. Besides, we set out to-day. I beg pardon, Major, for thus speaking of all our little affairs before you: but you are of the profession. To-day we depart. I ask you, Thiébaut, to hold out only twenty days; at the end of that time I shall be in Rome again, and even before. Éblé, you will rejoin me at Civita-Castellana. I shall concentrate there, it is a fine position. You excuse me, my dear Major, I am one of those players who put their cards on the table; with an inferiority in men and munitions such as mine, one must take one’s precautions, and,” as while listening, the young man was letting his coffee get cold:

“Drink your coffee hot, Major; Scipio, my general factotum, prides himself on his coffee.”

“It is indeed excellent,” said the Major.

“Then empty your cup, my young friend, for if you are agreeable, we are going on horseback to review the garrison from which Thiébaut will pick out his five hundred men.”

As all rose, Scipio appeared, enquiring what books,

maps and plans were to be taken, what trunks to be packed.

"No, no, Scipio, leave everything as it is; we shall find it all on our return. My dear Major," continued Championnet, buckling on his sword, "General Mack will do well to lodge here, I think; he will find a library and excellent maps; commend them to him, I beg, I think a good deal of them; they are, like my palace a loan to him, and I place them in your safe keeping. If, as is probable, the King lodges opposite in the Farnese palace, it will be very convenient; His Majesty and his Commander-in-Chief can signal to one another from the windows."

"If the General inhabits this palace," answered the Major, "I can answer for it that anything that may have belonged to you will be sacred."

"Scipio," said Championnet, "a change of uniform and six shirts in a portmanteau; you can strap it on behind my saddle now; the review over, we shall march immediately."

Five minutes afterwards his orders were executed; and four or five horses were awaiting their riders at the door of the Corsini palace; among them a fresh one for the Major, presented by Championnet in place of his own, so fatigued. The little cortège then set out taking the right bank of the Tiber by the Lungara to the bridge of St. Angelo, which it crossed to the left bank, proceeding by the Ripetta into the Square of the People, where was drawn up in battle array the garrison of Rome.

This garrison numbered nearly three thousand; two-thirds French, a third Polish. On seeing the General, a spontaneous cry arose "Long live the Republic!"

Championnet advanced to the centre of the first line, and signed that he wished to speak. The cries ceased.

"Friends," said he, "I am obliged to leave Rome, but I do not abandon it. I leave Colonel Thiébaud who will occupy Fort St. Angelo with five hundred men; I have given my word of honour to come and deliver it in twenty days; do you engage with me?"

"Yes, yes, yes," cried three thousand voices.

"On your honour?" said Championnet.

"On our honour," repeated the three thousand.

"Now," continued Championnet, "choose from among you five hundred men ready to be entombed in the ruins of the fort rather than surrender it."

"All, all! We are all ready," was the cry.

"Sergeants," said the General, "come out from the ranks and choose fifteen men from each company."

"Friends," said Championnet to them when this had been done and they were drawn up apart, "you will guard the flags of the two regiments and we will come to take them back. Let the standard bearers pass into your ranks." Then arose frenzied cries of "Long live Championnet! Long live the Republic!"

"Colonel Thiébaud," continued Championnet, "swear and make your men swear that you will let yourselves be killed to the last man rather than surrender."

Every arm was stretched out, every voice cried:

"We swear it."

Championnet approached his aide-de-camp.

"Embrace me, Thiébaud," said he, "if I had a son, I should give to him the glorious mission I confide to you," and they embraced in the midst of general hurrahs. Two o'clock was striking.

"Major Riescach," said Championnet to the young messenger, "the four hours have elapsed, and to my great regret, I have no longer the right to detain you. I hope that you will honour me by accepting your mount as a souvenir of the too short moments we have just passed together."

"Thanks from the bottom of my heart," returned the young man bowing, and he laid his hand upon it.

"And now, what am I to report to General Mack?"

"All that you have seen and heard, sir. Brigadier Martin, take four men and escort Major Ulrich de Riescach to the gate of San-Giovanni, and rejoin us on the road of La Storta."

Championnet and the Major saluted for the last time; the latter and his escort plunging at a sharp trot into

the Via Babuino. Colonel Thiébaud and his five hundred returned by Ripetta to the Castle of St. Angelo where they shut themselves up; and the remainder of the garrison, with Championnet and his staff at its head, went out of Rome, with drums beating, by the People's Gate.

CHAPTER XIV

THE KING AT ROME

As General Mack had foreseen, his envoy re-joined him a little above Valmontone; but he did not listen to anything the Major told him except that the French had evacuated Rome; with which news he hastened to the King. They slept at Valmontone the same evening and by midday following reached Albano from whose heights the view extended beyond Rome to Ostia. As it was impossible to enter Rome the same day it was agreed that next morning at nine o'clock King Ferdinand should make his solemn entry, and proceed immediately to San Carlo to hear Mass.

A halt was called at seven in the evening, and the King was supping in a magnificent tent with General Mack, the Duke of Ascoli and the courtiers most favoured, when the arrival of a deputation from Rome was announced. They came to receive the King's orders for the next day's ceremony.

The King was radiant, he too, like Pompey and like Cæsar was to have his triumph. What a splendid effect it would produce at Caserta and among his good lazzaroni. He had then vanquished without a single shot, this terrible French republic! Decidedly General Mack was a great man!

The deputies dismissed, and everything arranged for the morrow, he resolved to announce the good news to the Queen by express courier; and did so as follows:

" My Dear Mistress,

" Everything is succeeding as we desire ; in less than five days I have reached the gates of Rome, where to-morrow I make my solemn entry. All have fled before our victorious arms, and to-morrow evening, from the Farnese palace, I shall write to the Sovereign Pontiff that he may, if such is his good pleasure, come and celebrate the feast of the Nativity with us at Rome.

" Ah ! if I could transport my crib here for him to see !

" The messenger I send to take you these good tidings is my usual courier Ferrari. Allow him, as a reward, to dine with my poor Jupiter who must be wearying for me. Reply to me in the same way ; reassure me as to your dear health and that of my beloved children, to whom, thanks to you and to our illustrious General Mack, I hope to bequeath a throne not only prosperous, but glorious.

" The fatigues of the campaign have not been so great as I feared. It is true that, up to the present, I have been able to drive nearly all the time.

" There is but one black spot on the horizon : in leaving Rome the republican general has left five hundred men and a colonel in the Castle of St. Angelo ; with what object ? I don't quite understand, but am not uneasy otherwise : as our illustrious friend General Mack assures me that they will surrender at the first summons.

" To our speedy meeting, my dear mistress, whether you come, that the festival may be complete, to celebrate the Nativity with us at Rome, or whether, all being quieted down, and His Holiness re-established on his throne, I gloriously re-enter my dominions.

" Receive, dear mistress and spouse, to share with my beloved children, the embraces of your tender husband and father.

" FERDINAND."

P.S.—" I hope that nothing tiresome has happened to my kangaroos, and that I shall find them quite as well as when I left them. *A propos*, transmit my most affectionate remembrances to Sir William and Lady Hamilton ; as to the Hero of the Nile, he must still be at Leghorn ; wherever he is, inform him of our triumphs."

It was a good while since Ferdinand had penned such

a long letter; but his enthusiasm explains his prolixity. On re-reading it he regretted not having thought of Sir William and Lady Hamilton before his kangaroos, but he did not think an alteration necessary; and he sealed and despatched the letter by Ferrari. After which he won a thousand ducats at whist, went radiant to bed and dreamed that he was going to make his entry, not at Rome, but at Paris!

Day dispelled this illusion, but his entry into Rome was indeed splendid. The municipality, on its knees, presented him with the keys of the city on a silver salver at the Gate of San Giovanni, to the accompaniment of a burst of song; and amid splendid military music he was followed by an imposing procession of his troops and artillery, in a rain of rose leaves thrown up into the air by a hundred young girls in white and choirs of children swinging censers who walked on ahead. It was a magnificent autumn day and the population lined the streets in its best clothes in this air sweet with the scent of flowers and incense.

Halts were made for the King to kiss the sacred stairs which Jesus Christ had trod, brought from Pilate's house at Jerusalem; and at San-Carlo to hear a Te Deum, then continuing along the Corso, and reversing the route from the Square of the People which Championnet had taken in leaving Rome, he reached the Farnese palace, the end of his long ride and of his triumph.

Covers for two hundred people were laid there in the long gallery; but the whole of Rome seemed to have gathered in the square outside, even overflowing into the palace itself with cries of "Long live the King," so that Ferdinand had to leave the table three times to show himself at the windows.

So, drunk with joy and wine, his heart bounding with pride and unwilling to wait the morrow to announce his entry into Rome to Pope Pius VI., and forgetting that, as prisoner of the French, His Holiness was not free to act, as soon as he had taken coffee, Ferdinand passed into a study and indited the following letter:

"To His Holiness Pope Pius VI., First Vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Prince of Apostles, King of Kings,

"Your Holiness will no doubt learn with the greatest satisfaction, that by the help of Our Lord Jesus Christ and under the august protection of the blessed Saint Januario, this very day, with my army, I entered, without resistance, triumphantly into the capital of the Christian world. The French have fled, terrified at the sight of the cross and at the simple lustre of my arms. Your Holiness can therefore resume your supreme and paternal power which I shall shelter with my army. May you then quit your too modest dwelling in the Chartreuse, and on the wings of cherubims, like our holy maid of Loretto, come and alight at the Vatican to purify it with your sacred presence. Your Holiness will be able to celebrate divine service at St. Peter's on the birthday of Our Saviour."

That evening, the King drove along the principal streets of Rome to cries of "Long live King Ferdinand ! Long live His Holiness Pius VI !" He stopped to hear a cantata in his honour at the Argentina Theatre ; then to see Rome illuminated he mounted to the topmost rampart of the Pincian hill.

The whole of the city was light as day. One monument only, surmounted by a tricolour flag, like a solemn and menacing protest of France against the occupation of Rome, remained dark in the midst of all this brilliance, mute in the midst of all this noise.

It was the Castle of St. Angelo.

When going up the Pincio from the People's Square, the King had seen a crowd of women and children dancing round a bonfire in the Square. He had stopped and had asked what they were all doing, and had learned that the fire was made of a tree of Liberty planted eighteen months previously by the consuls of the Roman Republic. Touched by this devotion to good principle, Ferdinand had thrown a handful of money to the crowd crying : " Bravo, friends, amuse yourselves."

In the Navone Square he saw a second bonfire, and

received a similar reply; and taking another handful of money, this time from the Duke of Ascoli, he threw that also to the people. The same thing happened in Colonna Square, where there were many men, and where fighting for the money became serious, and where an unfortunate passer-by in a large cloak with a hat drawn down over his eyes was assumed to be a Jacobin and thrown by the combatants into the fire where he perished miserably, to the cries of joy of the populace; who, all at once, conceived the brilliant idea that well as it was to burn the trees, it would be better still to burn the people who had planted them. These were the two consuls of the Roman Republic, Mattei and Zaccalone; and these names, for a year past, had been blessed and revered by the people to which these two truly liberal-minded men had devoted their time, their intelligence and their fortunes. But it was a day of re-action. A man whom Zaccalone had obliged to send his son to school, a young Roman, jealous of individual liberty, suggested that one of the trees of Liberty should be kept to hang the consuls on. This suggestion was adopted unanimously; and the crowd straightway made for the houses of the consuls. Happily both had quitted Rome. But two of their dependents declared that they knew where to find them, and would give them up. The offer was greeted with enthusiasm, and in the meantime the crowd began to pillage the houses of the absentees and to throw their furniture out of the windows.

Among the furniture, in each house, was a splendid bronze clock with this inscription:

To the Consuls of the Roman Republic, from grateful Israelites!

For the consuls had issued a decree bestowing the rights of citizens upon the Jews. But gratitude here proved a misfortune; the people were reminded of their existence; and with cries of "To the Ghetto!" rushed to find them.

Now the Jews on the departure of Championnet had

hastened to set up again the Ghetto barriers which they had taken down when the decree of their emancipation was published; they had withdrawn again within them and the crowd found material obstacles opposed to its progress. Nothing daunted it conceived the idea of throwing over the barricades lighted brands from the neighbouring bonfire. No sooner said than done; pitch and tar were added, and soon the Ghetto looked like a bombarded town; and flames began to announce that fires had broken out in five or six places. In an hour's time, the doors and barriers gave way of themselves, and with cries of terror, the whole of the wretched population, men, women and half-naked children, surprised in sleep, precipitated itself out into the city like a torrent. This was what the Romans were hoping for; each seized his Jew and a whole repertory of atrocious tortures was carried out upon the unfortunate people; those were fortunate who were thrown into the Tiber and purely and simply drowned.

These amusements lasted all night and the following days and could not but attract the King's attention. In answer to his enquiries he was shown the decree of the Republic bestowing the rights of citizens upon the Jews; he asked who were the people responsible for such an abhorrent act; and was told the consuls, Mattei and Zaccalone.

"Then these are the men to punish; not the people they emancipated," replied Ferdinand, preserving his natural common-sense even amid his prejudices; and he added that if the two men who had gone to find them gave them up, there would be five hundred ducats each for them, and the two consuls would be hanged.

The Roman crowd delighted with this liberality, decided that if the King was to provide a real gallows for the event they could afford to cut down the remaining tree of Liberty, and present him with the logs from it so that he might have a fire of good revolutionary wood. And this idea charmed the King so much that he set aside two of the largest logs and sent them to the Queen with this letter:

“ My Dear Spouse,

“ You are aware of my fortunate entry into Rome without encountering the least obstacle on my way; the French have vanished like smoke. There remain the five hundred Jacobins in the Castle of St. Angelo; but these keep so quiet that I believe they only ask to be forgotten.

“ Mack sets out to-morrow with 25,000 men to fight the French; he will rally Micheroux's division on the way, which will give him 38,000 or 40,000 men, and he will only give fight to the French with the certainty of crushing them.

“ Here we are in continual fêtes. Would you believe that those miserable Jacobins had emancipated the Jews! For three days past the Roman people has been hunting them through the streets just as I hunt my deer in the forest of Persano, and my boars in the woods of Asproni; but I am promised better than that: it seems that they are on the track of the two consuls of the so-called Roman republic. I have put a price of five hundred ducats on the head of each of them. I think that hanging them will make a good example, and, if they are hanged I keep for the garrison in the Castle of St. Angelo the surprise of assisting at their execution.

“ I am sending you to burn on Christmas night two big logs cut from the tree of Liberty in the Rotunda Square; warm yourselves well, you and the children, and in doing so think of your spouse and father who loves you.

“ To-morrow I issue an edict to instil a little good order among all these Jews, to make them return to their Ghetto and to submit them to a wise discipline. I will send you a copy of this edict directly it is issued.

“ Announce at Naples the favour heaped upon me by the divine goodness; have a Te Deum sung by our Archbishop Capece Zurlo, whom I suppose is a good deal tainted with jacobinism; this will be his punishment; command public rejoicings and urge Vanni to hasten on the affair of that damned Nicolino Caracciolo.

“ I shall keep you informed of the success of our illustrious General Mack in proportion as I learn it myself.

“ Take every care of your precious health and believe in the sincere and eternal affection of your pupil and spouse.

“ FERDINAND B.”

P.S.—“ Present my respects to the Ladies. Although a little ridiculous these good princesses are none the less the august daughters of King Louis XV. You may authorize Ariola to make a small payment to those seven Corsicans who have served them as a bodyguard and who were recommended to them by the Count de Narbonne, one of the last ministers of your dear sister Marie Antoinette, I believe; that will please them and commits us to nothing.”

The next day Ferdinand issued his decree against the Jews, which was in fact a vigorous re-instatement of the one abolished by the so-called Roman Republic. And the day following, General Mack took leave of the King, leaving five thousand men to guard Rome, and set off to pursue Championnet and give him battle wherever he should encounter him.

At the very moment his rearguard began its march, a procession, not wanting for character, entered Rome by the opposite gate.

Four mounted Neapolitan gendarmes were preceding two men bound together by the arms. These two men were wearing white cotton caps and coats of indecisive colour such as are worn by the sick in hospitals; they were mounted, saddle-less, on two asses, and each ass was led by a peasant, who, armed with a thick stick, threatened and insulted the prisoners. The prisoners were the two ex-consuls, and the peasants were the two men who had promised to give them up. The two unhappy fugitives had sought refuge in a hospital founded by Mattei in his native town of Valmontone, and had been denounced there by an attendant who owed his place to him.

Scarcely had they entered Rome and had been recognised, than the crowd began to insult them, throwing mud and stones; then with cries of “ Death to them ! ” tried to carry out its threats. The gendarmes, however, explained that they were being brought back to be hanged next day, before King Ferdinand, by the public executioner, in the Square of St. Angelo; and this promise calmed the crowd which, however, indemni-

fied itself for the delay by continuing to howl at the ex-consuls and to throw mud and stones.

They, resigned, awaited events, mute, sad, but calm. Thus was traversed three parts of Rome till their prison was reached. Two hours later placards affixed throughout the city announced the execution for the morrow at mid-day.

The Square of St. Angelo was the usual place for executions; and at seven the next morning the scaffold was set up, the gallows raised, and a balcony adorned with rich draperies to serve as a Royal box from which to witness the execution. These preparations drew such an immense crowd from all parts of Rome, that the carpenters at work on the scaffold had to be protected by a guard. The right bank of the Tiber where rises the great gate of the Castle of St. Angelo alone was deserted. The terrible fortress which is for Rome what the Bastille was at Paris, and Fort St. Elmo at Naples, although dumb and seemingly uninhabited, inspired sufficient dread to keep everyone off the bridge leading to it. And truly the tricolour flag hoisted above it, seemed to say to all the people, drunk with bloody orgies: "Take care what you do, France is still here."

At eleven o'clock the condemned men, still clothed in hospital garb, were brought out of prison, set again upon the asses, and accompanied by that brotherhood of penitents which assists sufferers on the scaffold, and followed by an immense concourse of people, taken to the church of San Giovanni to make a public apology. The King, proceeding from the Farnese palace to the place of execution, passed by just as the executioner's assistants were forcing the prisoners to their knees. Formerly in such a case the Royal presence would have been the salvation of the prisoners; this time it assured their execution.

The crowd opened to let the King pass; he cast an uneasy glance at the Castle of St. Angelo and its flag, alighted from his carriage amid acclamations, and appeared on the balcony bowing to the people. A moment later loud cries announced the approach of the

condemned; who were preceded and followed by a detachment of Neapolitan mounted police who drove back the crowd and kept clear a space for the execution.

The silence and solitude of the Castle of St. Angelo re-assured everyone, and it was thought no more of. At five minutes to twelve, the condemned, who seemed broken with fatigue, but calm and resigned, got down from their asses at the foot of the scaffold. The penitents pressing them more closely, exhorted them to death, offering them the crucifix to kiss.

Mattei, on kissing it, said:

“O Christ! thou knowest that I die innocent, and, like thee, for the salvation and liberty of men.”

Zaccalone said:

“O Christ! thou art my witness that I forgive this people as thou hast forgiven thy executioners.”

The spectators nearest to the sufferers heard these words; they were greeted with some hooting.

Then a powerful voice cried: “Pray for the souls of those about to die.” It was the voice of the leader of the penitents.

Everyone fell on his knees to say an *Ave Maria*, even the King on the balcony, even the executioner and his assistants on the scaffold.

At that moment a cannon shot awoke the echoes, the scaffold broken up, gave way beneath the executioner and his assistants; the castle gate of St. Angelo opened, and a hundred grenadiers, preceded by a drum beating the charge, crossed the bridge at a gallop, and amid cries of terror from the crowd, of “everyone look out for himself” of the police, of astonishment and fear from all, laid hold on the two condemned and carried them off to the Castle of St. Angelo, whose gate shut on them before the people, executioners, penitents, police and the King himself, awoke from their stupefaction.

The Castle of St. Angelo had spoken but one word, but, as one sees, it had been well said and had produced its effect.

The Romans were obliged to do without a hanging that day and to vent their rage on the Jews.

King Ferdinand returned to the Farnese palace in a very bad humour; this was the first check he had experienced since his commencement of the campaign, and, unluckily for him, it was not going to be the last.

The letter addressed by Ferdinand to the Queen had produced the effect he expected. The news of the triumph of the Royal arms spread like lightning throughout the kingdom; the bells of the three hundred churches in Naples pealed out announcing *Te Deums*; and salvoes of cannon from all the forts yelled with their brazen voices praises of the God of armies.

The noise resounded in every house in Naples, and, according to the opinion of the inhabitants, awakened joy or vexation. Liberals viewed with pain Ferdinand's triumph over the French, for to them the French idea represented humanity, love of public welfare, progress, light, liberty; whilst the Neapolitan idea meant barbarism, egoism, stagnation, obscurantism and tyranny. They therefore kept within doors, remembering the terrible deaths of the Duke of Torre and his brother. As to the absolutists, a great number, for they were composed of all belonging to or depending on the Court, and the whole of the common people, fishermen, porters, lazzaroni; these were in a state of the highest jubilation, rushing through the streets crying, "Long live Ferdinand IV! Long live Pius VI! Death to the French! Death to the Jacobins!" And in their midst, crying louder than the rest, was Fra Pacifico, returning to the monastery with his ass Jacobino, laden with provisions and braying with all his might.

Though the House of the Palm Tree was far from the centre of the city, the noise had penetrated even there, and had made Salvato start as a battle horse at the sound of a trumpet! The wounded man, though not quite cured, was going on well; from his bed he had moved to an armchair; from his armchair he walked about the room several times on the arm of Luisa; and she being absent one day, rejecting Giovannina's proffered aid, he had taken a little promenade alone; whereupon the maid, understanding that she could not

be to him what her mistress was, had retired into her room and had wept long and bitterly. And when she saw Luisa, light as a bird, return to the sick man's room after the chevalier's departure, she had uttered a groan sounding like a threat, hating her mistress as instinctively and even involuntarily as she had loved the young man.

"Oh!" she murmured, "he will be cured some day or other, and then he will go away; and she in her turn will suffer." And at this bad thought the tears dried in her eyes.

At every visit Dr. Cirillo was better pleased at his patient's progress; and the night before the celebration of the victory, after a careful examination, he had said: "Come, come, in ten or twelve days our invalid will be able to mount a horse and carry his own news to General Championnet." At these words Giovannina noticed the tears rise in Luisa's eyes, and the pallor of Salvato; and when, after going with Dr. Cirillo to the garden, her mistress did not soon return, "Ah," said she, "she weeps!" As for Salvato, his head had fallen on his hands, and he had become motionless, and indifferent to all around him, as a statue.

Luisa's return, as always, brought a smile to his face; the first thing she was accustomed to see on entering the room. A smile is the soul's sun, and its least ray suffices to dry up that heart's dew called tears. Luisa, in her turn, responded with a smile, and holding out both hands to the young man: "Oh, how happy I am," said she, "that you are quite out of danger!"

But the next day when the noise of cannon and the pealing of bells reached the sick chamber, Salvato started as we have said, rose to his feet, and, looking in turns at each of his nurses, demanded: "What is that?"

"Go and ask, Giovannina," said Madame San Felice, "it is probably for some fête that we have forgotten," and she stretched out her hand towards a calendar. "Yes, indeed," said she joyously, "it is Advent Sunday."

"Is it a custom at Naples to celebrate Advent with salvoes of cannon?" asked Salvato, and as he spoke Giovannina returned.

"Well?" said her mistress.

"Michael is there, madame, he has some news; perhaps madame had best question him herself."

"I will come back, friend," said Luisa to Salvato, and she went out in her turn, while Salvato, without a question to the maid, closed his eyes and became once more mute.

Luisa found her foster-brother in the dining-room; his expression was triumphant, he was clad in his best, and ribbons streamed from his hat.

"Victory!" cried he, "victory, little sister! Our great King Ferdinand has entered Rome, General Mack is victorious at all points, the French are exterminated; the Jews are being burned and the Jacobins hanged. Long live the Madonna . . . ! Well, what's the matter?" For Luisa had turned pale and her strength failing her, had sunk upon a chair. She well understood that if the French were victorious, Salvato could stay with her and wait for them at Naples; but if defeated, that he ought to leave even her, to go and share the reverses of his brothers in arms. "It is nothing," she murmured, "but the news is so astonishing and unexpected Are you sure about it, Michael?"

"But you don't hear the cannon, then, or the bells? But see, if you doubt me, here is the Chevalier who will confirm it; he must know the news as he is at the Court."

"My husband!" cried Luisa, "but it is not his usual time!" and she turned quickly to look into the garden, adding, "Make haste, Michael, into the sick room; and tell our friend that the noises are to celebrate Advent." And as she shut the door into the corridor behind him, the Chevalier appeared at the top of the steps.

"Ah," cried he, coming in, "here is news I hardly expected: King Ferdinand is a hero! The French in retreat! Rome abandoned by Championnet! And

unhappily murders and executions as if Victory knew not how to remain pure. Not thus did the Greeks understand their Niké, daughter of Force and Valour. The Romans said: '*Woe to the vanquished!*' And I say: '*Woe to the victors,*' whenever scaffolds and gallows are added to the spoils of war. I should have made a bad conqueror, Luisa."

"But is it all true?" then said she.

"Official, my dear. I have it from the lips of His Highness the Duke of Calabria, who has sent me home to dress as quickly as possible for a dinner he is giving, which I am obliged to attend. It is a dinner of savants; Latin inscriptions and allegories are required for the King's return. He is to have magnificent fêtes from which it will be difficult to excuse your attendance, my dear child. When the Prince came to tell me the news at the library, I was so surprised that I nearly fell off my ladder; a proof that I furiously doubted his father's military genius. But you will help me dress, will you not? It will be an academic dinner, and I shall be so bored that I shall return as soon as I can from all those pedants; but that, I fear, can't be before ten or eleven to-night. And now, we must make haste, there is no time to lose."

In the meantime, as Salvato had merely acknowledged Michael's entrance by a friendly sign, and had thereupon sunk back again in his chair with closed eyes as though to sleep, Michael and Giovannina had withdrawn to the embrasure of a window and had commenced an animated conversation in low tones on the great news. Giovannina had quickly realised that it could not fail to affect profoundly the destinies of Luisa and Salvato, and in consequence, her own. Michael, too, was overflowing with the excitement which had infected the whole of the city, and little by little, forgetting Salvato and Luisa's injunctions, they raised their voices so that, not being in reality asleep, he could not but hear and comprehend something of what had taken place and the actual significance of the rejoicing sounds of the

bells and the cannon. Thus it was, that when, at length, Luisa, having seen her husband depart, dressed for the dinner; returned to the sick room, he had not only learned all that Michael could tell him, but his preparations for his own departure were already made. He had given Michael a hundred louis to procure for him a strong horse of local breed, inured to fatigue; the complete dress of a peasant, and for himself the finest sword he could buy as a parting gift. The horse was to be ready saddled in the lane at the back of the House of the Palm Tree at nine o'clock that night.

The unsuspecting Luisa, then, returned to find a new light in his eyes, neither that of fever nor of love, but of enthusiasm.

"Luisa!" he murmured in his gentlest voice.

"Oh!" cried she. "Unhappy am I, I see you know all."

Salvato bowed his head.

"And (she made an effort), and when do you leave?"

"I had decided for nine to-night, Luisa, but I had not seen you again then!"

"And now?"

"I shall go when you wish."

"Ah, Salvato, then you will go at nine, as you had settled. Could you think that I should love you so ill as ever advise you contrary to your honour? Your going will cost me many tears, for you will take away with you the unknown soul you brought and gave to me, and only God could divine the sadness and solitude of the Void Ah, poor deserted room," continued she, while her tears flowed, "how often shall I come in the night, seeking the dream instead of the reality! How dear, how poetic in your absence will all these common objects become! This bed where you have lain suffering, this armchair in which I have watched over you, this glass from which you have drunk, this table on which you leaned, all will speak to me of you, friend, whereas to you nothing will speak of me"

"Except my heart, Luisa, which is filled with you!"

"Then, Salvato, you are less unhappy than I; for you will go on seeing me; your absence will change nothing of my habits; you will see me come in and out of this room at the same hours as when you were here: not a day, not an instant that passed here will be forgotten; but I—where shall I seek you? On battle fields, amid fire and smoke, amid the wounded and the dead! . . . Oh! write to me, write to me, Salvato!" she added with a moaning cry.

"But can I?" asked he. "Suppose a letter came into your husband's hands?"

"Sealed or unsealed he would never read it; you do not understand what an angel of goodness he is. And even if he did read it, would you say anything else than a tender brother might say to a beloved sister?"

"I shall say that I love you."

"If you say only that, Salvato, he will pity us. Reflect, my friend, he is more a father than a spouse to me. Since the age of five I have been with him, and to him I owe everything—all my best qualities; for he has taught them to me. You are good, great and generous, I see it and judge you with the eyes of a woman who loves. Well, he is better, greater, more generous, and God grant that he may not have occasion to prove it to you one of these days."

"But, Luisa, you will make me jealous of him."

"Oh, be jealous then, if a lover can be jealous of a father. I love you profoundly, Salvato, since I tell you so, now, without being asked, but if I had to save one only of you two from supreme danger, I should save him, Salvato, free to return to die with you."

"Ah, Luisa, how blessed is the Chevalier to be thus loved!"

"And yet, you would not desire this love which one has for spiritual and superior beings; for this love has not prevented mine for you: I love him better than you, and I love you more than him; that's it."

And, saying this, as if Luisa had spent all her strength in the struggle of the two affections which held, one

her soul, and the other her heart, she subsided into a chair, joined her hands, gazed upwards, and, with a smile on her lips, murmured unintelligibly.

"What are you doing?" asked Salvato.

"I am praying," she answered.

"To whom?"

"To my guardian angel Kneel, Salvato, and pray with me," and he knelt down as if overcome by a higher power.

After some minutes the lovers gazed at one another with deep sadness, but with supreme serenity in their hearts.

Sad hours pass as rapidly, sometimes more rapidly, than happy ones. Nina came in and out without their noticing it; they were living in a world apart, neither of heaven nor of earth; but as the clock sounded each hour they sighed.

At eight o'clock Nina brought in a bundle tied up in a napkin, it contained the peasant's costume bought by Michael. The two women left Salvato to effect his change of dress; and when he opened the door to them again, Luisa could not forbear a cry of astonishment. As a mountaineer, Salvato was handsomer and more elegant, if possible, than as a townsman. The last hour fled as if the minutes were seconds, and as nine o'clock struck, Nina entered, pale and agitated, to say that Michael was waiting.

"Let us go," said Luisa, and she held out her hand.

"You are noble and great, Luisa," said Salvato, and he rose; but he tottered, man though he was.

"Lean on me yet again, my friend," said she, "alas, it will be for the last time."

On going into the room which looked into the lane they heard a horse neigh.

"Open the window, Giovannina," said Madame San Felice. Giovannina obeyed. A little below the window-sill they made out in the darkness a man and a horse; the window opened on a level with the floor of the little balcony. They went on to this, and Nina kept behind them like a shadow. Both the lovers were weeping,

but silently, not to enfeeble one another. Nina was dry-eyed, her eyelids burned; she breathed hard.

"Luisa," said Salvato in a halting voice, "I have wrapped in paper a gold chain for Nina, give it to her from me." Luisa nodded and pressed his hand, in silence. Then to the young lazzaroni: "Thanks, Michael. So long as the remembrance of this angel lives in my heart (and he threw his arm round her neck), so long, that is, as my heart beats, each beat will remind me of the good friends in whose hands I leave her and to whom I confide her."

With a convulsive, perhaps an involuntary movement, Giovannina seized the young man's hand, kissed it, almost bit it; and then, as the surprised Salvato turned, darted back.

"I have change to give you, sir," said Michael.

"Give it to your old mother, and tell her to pray to God and the Madonna for Luisa and me."

"Good!" said Michael. "What, am I weeping now . . . ?"

"Au revoir, mv friend!" said Luisa. "May the Lord and all the angels of Heaven guard you!"

"Au revoir?" murmured Salvato.

"Yes," she answered. "Leave to God the unknown future. But whatever may betide, I will never leave you with the word good-bye."

"Well, so be it!" said Salvato, bestriding the balcony and getting into the saddle without removing his arms, linked round the neck of Luisa who bent down towards him with the suppleness of a reed, "so be it, adored of my heart. Au revoir!" And the last syllable of that word of hope was lost on their lips in a first kiss.

Salvato uttered a cry both of joy and pain, and, spurring his horse into a gallop, was so snatched from Luisa's arms and disappeared in the night.

CHAPTER XV

BATTLE AND VICTORY

CHAMPIONNET had reached Civita Castellana forty-eight hours after leaving Rome. His first care was to put the citadel, used only as a prison, in a state of defence; his next to assign positions to the different corps of his little army.

He placed Macdonald, who was to bear the brunt of the morrow's engagement, at Borghetto with seven thousand men, ordering them to lean on the extreme right of the French army at the foot of Civita Castellana. He sent General Lemoine with five hundred men into the defiles of Terni, and Casabianca and Rusca into those of Ascoli on the extreme left to guard his flank. He sent couriers to General Pignatelli to join up with the Polish General Kniasewitch, and to march forward in whatever direction he heard the sound of firing. Lahure was ordered to take up a position at Regnano, in advance of Civita Castellana, and General Maurice Mathieu to go forward to Vignanello. He also sent couriers along the Spoleto road to hasten the arrival of Joubert with his promised reinforcement of three thousand men. These arrangements made, he resolutely awaited the enemy, all of whose movements he could follow from his high position at Civita Castellana, where he held in reserve a thousand men for eventualities.

At last General Mack began his march, having split up his army into five columns. He took no special precautions, relying, one supposes, on the friendliness of the neighbouring populations, all more or less in

revolt, and preceded by a proclamation ridiculous in its barbarity.

Championnet had left three hundred sick in hospital in Rome, relying on the honour and humanity of the enemy, but Mack drew up a manifesto declaring that if the French general dared to defend his position at Civita Castellana, the three hundred would respond with their heads for the Neapolitan slain, and he delivered up head for head, to the just *indignation* of the Roman people.

Macdonald's loyal nature was exasperated by such a proclamation, and he immediately galloped off to Civita Castellana to show it to Championnet and demand his orders. Championnet merely shrugged his shoulders; as Macdonald stood by pale and agitated.

"Don't you know the man we are dealing with?" said he. "But what have you replied to it?"

"I have ordered it to be read throughout the army."

"That is well done; a soldier should know his enemy; and better still, despise him. And what more?"

"I think that each Neapolitan prisoner should answer with *his* head for each sick Frenchman killed in Rome."

Championnet looked at Macdonald with infinite gentleness, and laying a hand on his shoulder, answered:

"My friend, you are wrong; not with bloody reprisals should Republicans reply to their enemies; return to your men and read to them this 'Order of the day of General Championnet before the Battle of Civita Castellana'; for thus the battle you will gain to-morrow will be called, Macdonald," and he went on dictating to his secretary as follows:—

"Every Neapolitan soldier taken prisoner will be treated with the usual humanity and kindness of Republicans to their enemies.

"Every soldier who permits himself ill-treatment of any kind of a disarmed prisoner will be severely punished.

"Generals will be responsible for the carrying out of these two orders. . . ."

Championnet had just taken his pen to sign when a horseman, wounded and covered with blood, dashed up.

“General,” said he, “the Neapolitans have surprised an advance guard of fifty at Baccano; have cut all their throats in the guard-house; and have set fire to it amid cries of joy from the people.”

Championnet affixed his signature. “It is thus,” said he, “that civilisation should reply to barbarism. Go, Macdonald, and publish this order of the day immediately.”

These were the last great days of the Republic.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, Championnet visited Lahure's advance posts and Macdonald's division, and mingled with the men, talking to them paternally and hopefully of the morrow. In the evening he had wine, bread and meat distributed to all; great fires were lit, and regimental bands played the “Marseillaise” and “Song of Departure,” a celebration before battle astonishing to the peasants looking down on the scene from their mountain villages.

The night passed peacefully; but the rising sun shone on the whole army of Mack, advancing in three visible and two concealed columns. The central division, numbering twenty thousand, under Mack himself, was to attack Macdonald and his seven thousand.

Lahure drew the first fire, and twice repulsed the enemy, who came on very vigorously. They were the same men who had massacred the advanced post at Baccano the evening before. Micheroux, supporting them with artillery, brought them again to the charge, and they carried the village with a heavy fire. Upon this, Lahure, forming his men in square, withdrew them in excellent order on Civita Castellana, and reached the bridge with his forces intact, fighting all the way. The hot pursuit had put some disorder into the Neapolitan ranks; and seeing this, Championnet, from the top of his rock, ordered Lahure to retake the offensive, sending him a reinforcement, which arrived at a run with fixed bayonets and drums beating. The Neapolitans, at this unlooked-for fresh attack, hesitated, broke ranks and fled.

Lahure pursued, made five hundred prisoners, killed

seven or eight hundred, took two flags, four guns, and returned to his original position at Regnano.

In the meantime, the enemy's right fared no better at the hands of General Maurice Mathieu at Vignanello, which they evacuated, fleeing till they reached Borghetto, and leaving to the French five hundred killed, five hundred prisoners, a flag and four guns.

The attack of the centre, led by Mack with thirty thousand men, was more serious.

Macdonald's advance guard was commanded by General Duhesme, from the army of the Rhine, eager to distinguish himself, who, instead of awaiting an attack, ordered a charge, at the same time manœuvring some light guns on the enemy's flank. Taken thus unawares, Mack's advance column was thrown into confusion, and fell back on the second, abandoning guns, munitions, flags and six hundred prisoners. But even so, Duhesme's position was not a happy one, and he was forced to retreat step by step before the second column, the rally of the first and a swarm of peasants with rifles. Macdonald, seeing this, sent to tell him to return to his former position, halt, and form battalions in square to receive the enemy on the bayonet; placed some artillery on a slight rise to take the Neapolitans crossways, and dividing his own men, passed to right and left of Duhesme's square and charged.

Championnet, dominating the immense chessboard, could not but admire the intrepidity of Macdonald, whom he loved as a brother, but he was considering that he should perhaps send a message ordering him to retreat and bring on to the Neapolitan flank Lahure and Maurice Mathieu, when he saw Macdonald begin to do so; and Duhesme, reforming, dash against the enemy's centre, forcing him to loosen his pressure on Macdonald. Then both Macdonald and Duhesme formed into square battalions, and the battlefield had the appearance of thirty thousand men besieging six redoubts, each composed of twelve hundred men, and vomiting torrents of fire.

Mack, finding it impossible to prevail thus, placed his

numerous guns in such a position as to rake the French squares, and at the same time to protect a formidable column which he held in readiness to cut the Republican army in two. Against such a disposition of forces Championnet was uneasily aware neither courage nor genius could prevail. His eye was piercing Mack's wave-like masses on the horizon, when suddenly towards the left he saw, towards Rieti, a glitter of arms in a rapidly advancing whirlwind of dust. He thought it must be a reinforcement sent for by Mack, when turning to take counsel with his officers, he saw on the side diametrically opposite a second corps, even larger than the first, making towards the battlefield with equal speed. One would have thought it a pre-arranged race between the two bodies of men. Could it be General Naselli from Florence, and Mack a cleverer organiser than one had supposed?

But all at once Championnet's aide-de-camp, Ville-neuve, uttered a cry of joy, and pointing to the clouds of dust on the Viterbo road:

"General," said he, "the tricolor flag!"

"Ah!" cried Championnet; "ours; Joubert has kept his word." Then, gazing at the other body from Rieti: "Oh!" he exclaimed, "but this would be too much luck!" while all around him shouted with one voice: "The tricolor flag! Pignatelli and the Roman Legion, Kniasewitch and his Poles! in short, Victory!"

Then, with a gesture of marvellous greatness, stretching out his hand towards Rome:

"King Ferdinand," cried the Republican general, "you can now, like Richard III., offer your crown for a horse."

But the day was yet to be won, and Championnet despatched Villeneuve to tell Macdonald to hold firm for another half-hour, sending with him two young officers with similar orders to Duhesme and the squares on the left. "Add," said he, "the General answers for everything." He watched them disappear, galloping into the fiery furnace; seeing, at the same time, the two Republican forces rapidly advancing quite unseen by

the enemy, upon whose flanks their cavalry suddenly fell like avalanches, hewing a passage for their infantry protected by three pieces of light artillery.

Then happened what Championnet had foreseen. The Neapolitans, taken completely by surprise, began to leave their ranks; Macdonald and Duhesme saw that something extraordinary and unforeseen had occurred by the confusion into which they were thrown, and seized the opportunity to break squares and unite like pieces of three immense serpents, and during a charge with fixed bayonets and cries of "Long live the Republic!" with irresistible impetus they drove the enemy before them.

"Come, friends," cried Championnet to the five or six hundred men he had kept as a reserve, "let it not be said that our brothers were conquering before our eyes and that we had no part in the victory. Forward!" And hurrying his men into the horrible struggle, he also made his breach in the living wall.

But in the midst of this immense disorder a great misfortune nearly happened. Kellerman's dragoons and Kniasewitch's Poles, having fallen on the enemy masses from opposite sides, and pierced them like wedges driven into an oak, met each other in the middle, and but for two young men from their separate ranks embracing with cries of "Long live the Republic," would have proceeded to exterminate one another by mistake. These young men were Hector Caraffa with Kellerman's force, who had been sent to demand help from Joubert; and Salvato Palmieri with Kniasewitch and Pignatelli, who had fallen in with them on his way to rejoin his regiment. This joyful embrace at the head of their respective columns, amid cries of "Victory! Victory" from ten thousand voices, was thus happily in time to prevent French and Poles from firing on one another.

Indeed, the victory was complete; and Championnet came up to finish the rout; it was terrible, mad, unheard of. Thirty thousand Neapolitans defeated, dispersed, fleeing in all directions, were struggling amid twelve

thousand French victors, combining their movements with implacable coolness to annihilate at one blow an enemy three times more numerous.

In the midst of this frightful *débacle* the French chiefs met; Championnet made Salvato Palmieri and Hector Caraffa chiefs of brigade on the spot; leaving to them, Macdonald and Duhesme, all the honours of the victory he had planned; and pressing the hands of Kellerman, Kniasewitch and Pignatelli, told them that they had saved Rome, must conquer Naples, and consequently continue the pursuit, and if possible cut off the enemy's retreat. Rome was to be re-occupied, the Republic set up again, and the French army was to march on Naples.

After this council on horseback, the trophies of victory were gathered up.

There were three thousand dead, as many wounded, and five thousand prisoners, who were disarmed and taken to Civita Castellana; eight thousand rifles were picked up; thirty guns and sixty abandoned artillery waggons were found, and finally amid all the baggage two vans full of gold.

This was the treasure of the royal army, totalling seven million francs.

With this portion of cash from the bill drawn by Sir William Hamilton on the Bank of England, and endorsed by Nelson, a distribution of pay was made that same evening to the French Army; a sum was set aside to purchase clothes and shoes for the men, and the remainder of nearly four millions was sent to France.

It was a night of general rejoicing; the wounded stifled their groans; the dead were forgotten.

Meanwhile, at Rome on the day of the battle, the King was engaged in hunting, as at Naples, to which he had sent for his pack of hounds. The previous evening he had received from Mack a despatch from Baccano promising victory, and concluding in these terms:—

“To-morrow, if God wills, your Majesty will have good news from Civita Castellana; and if your Majesty goes to the play, you will be able, between the acts, to

learn that the French have evacuated the Roman states."

The King had, therefore, slept well, and had set off to hunt at half-past six next morning; had had a successful day; and at the sound of distant firing had remarked, "It is Mack crushing Championnet!" He dined comfortably with his intimates, and at eight o'clock drove to the Argentina theatre. There a magnificent box had been got ready, with a table arranged in the drawing-room attached, so that between the opera and the ballet he could eat his macaroni as he did at Naples: it was rumoured that this spectacle was added to the entertainment billed, and the theatre was crammed.

His Majesty's entrance was loudly applauded. The order had been given to send on General Mack's couriers to the theatre, and the manager had been notified and was in attendance to raise the curtain and announce that the French had evacuated the Roman states. The dénouement of *Il Matrimonio Segreto* was, however, reached without interruption, and then two footmen carried into the royal box a supper table upon which, between candelabra laden with waxlights, appeared a dish of gigantic macaroni reposing on an appetising layer of tomatoes.

It was the King's turn to give his representation, which he preceded with his usual pantomimic announcement. Advancing to the front of the box dish in hand, Ferdinand, manœuvring the contents with his other hand, opened a mouth of immoderate size, and into it with that same hand let fall a veritable cascade of macaroni.

At this spectacle, the Romans, serious, and with their own lofty ideas of supreme dignity, burst out laughing. It was no longer a King they saw; it was Pasquin, Marfosio, or even Pulcinella.

Ferdinand, taking these cries for applause, was already half through his dish, and at the third cascade, when suddenly the door of his box opened so violently that he swung round, the macaroni half-way to his mouth, to see what low fellow dared thus to burst in on his important occupation.

This low intruder was Mack himself, but so pale, so scared, so covered with dust that at his appearance alone, the King let go his dish, and wiped his fingers on his batiste handkerchief.

“What is it?” asked he.

“Alas, sire!” replied Mack.

They understood one another. The King left the box, shutting the door behind him.

“Sire,” said the General, “I have abandoned the field of battle; I have quitted the army to come and tell you myself that there is not an instant to lose.”

“To do what?” demanded the King.

“To leave Rome, or we shall risk the French reaching before us the passes of the Abruzzi.”

“The French there before me,” cried the King. “Ascoli! Ascoli!”

The Duke came into the room.

“Tell the others to stay till the end of the performance, you understand? It is important that they should be seen in the box, that nothing may be suspected, and come with me.”

The Duke of Ascoli transmitted the royal order to the courtiers, who were far from guessing the whole truth, and rejoined the King, who had already reached the corridor crying:

“Ascoli! Ascoli! Come, stupid. Haven’t you heard that the illustrious General Mack has said there isn’t a moment to lose, or these French sons of will be before us at Sora?”

At the door of the theatre Ferdinand found his carriage, and sprung into it with Mack, calling to Ascoli to get in with them. They stopped at the Farnese palace; a courier had arrived from Vienna bringing a despatch from the Emperor of Austria; the King opened it with precipitation and read:

“My very dear brother, cousin, uncle, father-in-law, ally and confederate,

“Permit me to felicitate you very sincerely on the success of your arms and on your triumphal entry into Rome”

The King proceeded no further. "Ah, good!" said he, "this is indeed an arrival à propos," and he pocketed the despatch. Then, looking about for the courier, "Take this for your pains," said he, giving him his purse.

"Will your Majesty do me the honour to give me a reply for my august sovereign?" enquired the man.

"Certainly; but I shall give you a verbal one, as I have no time to write. That is so, is it not, Mack?"

"No matter," said the courier, "I can assure your Majesty that I have a good memory."

"Well, then; tell your august Sovereign from me; you understand, from me"

"I understand, sire."

"Tell him that his brother and cousin, uncle and father-in-law, ally and confederate, King Ferdinand, is an ass."

The courier stepped back, in alarm.

"Do not change a single syllable," went on the King, "and you will have uttered the greatest truth that can ever come from your lips."

The courier withdrew in stupefaction.

"And now," said the King, "let us set out."

"I venture to observe to your Majesty," said Mack, "that it will be prudent to cross the plain of Rome on horseback."

"On horseback? Why?"

"Because such an excellent horseman as your Majesty on a good mount could cut across country and escape any awkward encounters as you could not in a carriage. I ought to warn your Majesty that these infamous Jacobins have dared to say that if the King falls into their hands——"

"Well?"

"That they will hang him to the first street lamp, if in town; to the first tree, if beyond it."

"*Finnimo*, d'Ascoli! let us . . . ! What are you doing there, you other do-nothings? Two horses! Two horses! the best! They would do as they say, the brigands! But we can't get to Naples on horseback?"

"No, sire," replied Mack, "but at Albano you can take the first postchaise."

"You are right. A pair of boots! I can't travel post in silk stockings. Boots, do you hear, rogue?" A footman ran to get them, and the King put them on in the carriage without troubling about his friend d'Ascoli. The two horses were brought round.

"And now, ten men for an escort, and a cloak for his Majesty," cried Mack. The King mounted; and a dark-hued cloak was brought him, in which he enveloped himself.

Mack then mounted. "As I shall not be easy till I see your Majesty beyond the walls, I ask your Majesty's leave to accompany you to the Gate of St. John," said he. "The gates may be guarded by Jacobins."

"It is possible. Let us start," said the King, "but which way are you going?"

"To the Gate of the People, the nearest, and the one least likely for you to leave by, as it is in the opposite direction to the way you want to go. But once out of Rome, we shall skirt round the walls, and in a quarter of an hour reach the Gate of St. John."

On reaching the end of the Ripetta, the King seized the bridle of Mack's horse.

"Hulloa! General," said he, "who are all these folk coming in by the People's Gate?"

"Your Majesty's soldiers, I should say, if they had had time to flee so far."

"So they are, General, so they are; you don't know these fellows. When it comes to fleeing, they have wings on their heels," and the King held his cloak before his eyes, and passed through their midst without being recognised.

Once out of the town the little troop turned to the right, and following the Aurelian wall, finally reached the Gate of St. John, where sixteen days previously the King, with such great pomp, had received the keys of the city.

"And now," said Mack, "here is your road, sire; you will reach Albano in an hour; at Albano you are safe."

"You are leaving me, General?"

"Sire, it was my duty to think of the King before everything; it is now my duty to think of the army. And now, may God guard Your Majesty!"

Mack bowed to the King, and putting his horse to the gallop, retook the road by which he had come.

"And may the Devil take you, imbecile," the King murmured, burying his spurs in his horse, and urging him at full speed on the road to Albano. As it would appear, he had not changed his mind in regard to his general-in-chief.

Such was the panic-inspired pace set by Ferdinand that he and the Duke of Ascoli, on their splendid mounts, soon left the escort behind. If there is a spot in the world which, at night above all, is fantastic in aspect, it is the Roman Campagna, with its broken aqueducts like rows of gigantic figures marching in the darkness, its tombs suddenly rising up, sometimes to right of one, sometimes to left, and those mysterious sounds which seem like the lamentations of their inhabiting shades. Continually the King would bring his horse alongside his companion's, and gathering up the reins in readiness to leap the ditch, ask: "Do you see, d'Ascoli?" "Do you hear, d'Ascoli?" And d'Ascoli, calmer because he was braver, would look and answer, "I see nothing, sire"; would listen and reply, "Sire, I hear nothing." And Ferdinand, with his usual cynicism, would add:

"I told Mack I wasn't sure I was brave; well now, I have made up my mind about it: decidedly, I am not."

Thus they reached Albano. It was close on midnight. Every door was shut, including that of the posting station. The Duke of Ascoli, recognising it from the inscription over the door, dismounted and knocked loudly.

The postmaster came grumbling to the door in a very bad humour, but d'Ascoli pronounced that magic word at which all doors open: "Be easy, you will be well paid; we require a carriage, three post horses and a smart postillion"; and his face calmed.

"Their Excellencies shall have them in a quarter of an hour," said he, and, as a fine rain began to fall, he added: "Will the gentlemen come into my room, in the meantime?"

"Yes, yes," said the King, who had his own idea; "you are right, a room, a room immediately."

"And what am I to do with their Excellencies' horses?"

"Stable them; they will be fetched for me, for the Duke of Ascoli, do you understand?"

"Yes, Your Excellency."

The Duke of Ascoli stared at the King.

"I know what I am doing," said Ferdinand; "let us get on and lose no time."

The innkeeper took them to a room and lighted two candles, and then seeing the King uncloaked and quite plastered with orders, retired backwards bowing to the ground.

"Ah, my dear d'Ascoli," said the King in his most caressing voice, as soon as they were alone, "you don't know what you are about to do."

"I, sire?"

"But no," said the King, "it may be you will not . . ."

"Sire!" said d'Ascoli, gravely; "I will do all Your Majesty desires."

"Oh! I know well you are devoted to me; I know well you are my only friend, I know well you are the only man of whom I could ask such a thing."

"It is difficult?"

"So difficult, that if you were in my place, and I in yours, I do not know that I should do for you what I am going to ask you to do for me."

"Oh! sire, that is not a reason," replied d'Ascoli with a faint smile.

"I believe you doubt my friendship, that's bad," said the King.

"What matters at the moment, sire, is that Your Majesty should not doubt mine," responded the Duke with supreme dignity.

"Oh! when you have given me this proof, I shall be in no further doubt, I answer for it."

"What is this proof, sire? Probably something quite simple."

"Very simple, very simple," murmured the King; "you know that those brigands of Jacobins have threatened to hang me if I fall into their hands. Well, my dear friend, well, my dear d'Ascoli, it is simply to change clothes with me. You understand: if they take us, believing you to be the King, they will concern themselves with you only; meanwhile, I shall slip away, and then you will disclose your identity, and without having run much risk you will have the glory of saving your sovereign. You understand?"

"It is not a matter of the greater or less risk I shall run, sire; it's a matter of being of service to Your Majesty." And the Duke of Ascoli, taking off his coat and presenting it to the King, merely said, "Yours, sire!"

Profoundly egotistic though the King was, he yet felt touched with this devotion; he took the Duke in his arms and pressed him to his heart; then taking off his own coat he helped him into it and buttoned it on him with the dexterity of a practised valet. "There," said he, "now the ribbons; are you not a commander of Saint George? Have you not the ribbon of Marie Thérèse? Nor of St. Januario? You shall have them all, my poor d'Ascoli; you have earned them, but don't forget to remind me," said the King, passing the ribbons over his neck; "I should be quite capable of forgetting."

"Yes," said the Duke; "Your Majesty is certainly very absent-minded, I know that."

"Chut! it is not generous to mention my faults at such a moment. How well you look in the coat! One would say it had been made for you. You may have the badge of St. Januario which is attached; it is in diamonds, but I wish it were worth twice as much. It is singular how at ease I feel in your coat, d'Ascoli; I don't know why, but the other was stifling me. Ah!" And the King drew a deep breath.

At that moment they heard the master of the post coming. The King seized the cloak, and prepared to put it round the Duke's shoulders.

"But, sire. I cannot permit"

"Silence."

The master of the post entered. "The horses are in your Excellencies' carriage," said he, and stopped in astonishment, for some change for which he could not exactly account seemed to have taken place between the travellers.

Meanwhile, the King arranged the cloak on d'Ascoli's shoulders. "His Excellency, in order not to be disturbed on the journey, desires to pay up to Terracina," said he; "and will give a ducat to the postillions if they make good progress."

"In that case," said the man, bowing down before d'Ascoli, "His Excellency should progress like the King."

"Exactly," cried Ferdinand, "that is how His Excellency does wish to progress"; and he plunged his hand into the Duke's pocket and paid with his money, laughing at the good turn he was doing him.

The innkeeper took a candle and lighted d'Ascoli down the stairs with every mark of attention; but on reaching the carriage the Duke, doubtless from habit, gave place to the King.

"Never, never," cried Ferdinand, bowing hat in hand; "after Your Excellency. It is already too much honour for me to ride in the same carriage." And taking his seat after him, he placed himself on his left, crying: "His Excellency pays the post boys double!"

In an instant a postillion had leapt on horseback, and the carriage set off at a gallop on the road to Velletri, passing shadows in motion on both sides of the way with extraordinary velocity. These shadows caused the King uneasiness.

"My friend," said he to the postillion, "who are these people going our road, and at such a pace?"

"Excellency," replied the postillion, "it seems that there was a battle to-day between the French and the

Neapolitans, and that the Neapolitans were defeated; those people are the ones who are running away.”

“’Pon my word,” said the King to d’Ascoli, “I thought that we were the first; we are distanced. It is humiliating. What shanks those fellows have! Two ducats, postillion, if you pass them.”

Mack had been right in fearing the rapidity of movement of the French army: already, during the night after the battle, the two vanguards, one led by Salvato Palmieri, the other by Hector Caraffa, had taken the road, one hoping to reach Sora, the other to reach Ceprano, and thus to close the pass of the Abruzzi to the Neapolitans.

As to Championnet, as soon as he had finished his business at Rome, he was to take the Velletri and Terracina road through the Pontine marshes.

At daybreak, after having despatched to Lemoine and Casabianca news of the victory, with the order to march on Civita Ducale, to join forces with the army corps of Macdonald and Duhesme, and with them to take the road to Naples, he set out with six thousand men to return to Rome, and next day at eight in the morning appeared at the People’s Gate, re-entered the city amid joyful salvoes from the Castle of St. Angelo, took the left bank of the Tiber, and regained the Corsini palace, where, as Baron Riescach had promised, he found everything just where he had left it.

The same day the Republican government was set up again at Rome.

CHAPTER XVI

“ ALL IS LOST SAVE HONOUR ”

No capital in the world contains so many poets as Naples, and since the King's departure, and especially since his success, there had been a perfect deluge of sonnets, acrostics, quatrains, and distiches, insomuch that the Queen, judging it useless for the court poet to compose any, was employing him at a double salary to select the best among the three or four hundred pieces pouring in every day.

The evening of the ninth of December, 1789, had been fixed for the reading of those selected in the theatre of the Castle of Caserta; and in the presence of the six hundred spectators filling the auditorium this reading had been followed by the communication of a letter from the King to the Queen, which had just arrived by courier from the theatre of war, mainly, to be sure, about the pleasures of the chase, but terminating with the optimistic words, “ I expect news of a great victory in the evening ? ”

When the ballet was ended, the theatre emptied, the lights extinguished, and the guests dispersed, the Queen returned to her apartments with those intimate friends who were to remain and sup at the Castle with her, among whom were of course included Emma, her ladies-in-waiting, Sir William, Lord Nelson, the Prince of Castelcicala, Acton; and finally, and this was naturally most unusual, the aged Princesses Victoire and Adelaide, daughters of Louis XV., whom Caroline, on her husband's injunction, had invited to Court for

a fortnight with their bodyguard of seven. One of this bodyguard was invited to accompany them to the royal supper each evening, and on this occasion it had been the turn of Jean Baptiste de Cesare, of an old Corsican family, whose entry in a lieutenant's uniform had made some sensation, such was his remarkable resemblance to Prince Francis, the heir-apparent, a situation in which he acquitted himself, however, with much presence of mind.

The supper was very gay, everyone being persuaded, or having the appearance of it, that the French were actually defeated at that moment. Nelson only, in spite of Emma's magnetic looks, seemed so preoccupied that at last the Queen asked him what was on his mind. Nelson replied that he was uneasy because there was no indication that the Emperor of Austria had commenced operations, which looked as if he would postpone doing so till April.

"But," asked Emma, "did he not write to the King to begin his campaign, assuring him of his assistance when the King entered Rome?"

"Yes, I believe so," stammered the Queen.

"Did you see the letter yourself, madame?" demanded Nelson, fixing her with his grey eye as if she were an ordinary woman.

"No; but the King told M. Acton, and even supposing that we were deceived, is that a cause for despair?"

"Not necessarily," returned Nelson, "but, if by mischance, Mack has been defeated yesterday, in a fortnight the French would be in Naples."

The aged Princesses paled perceptibly; and the Queen, who attached more importance to Nelson's remarks than she chose to let appear, enquired if he really believed the Neapolitans, who were six to one of the French, unable to win when the English often attacked with equal or inferior forces.

"At sea, madame, yes, because the sea is our element," responded Nelson, "but on land it is another matter; on land the French are what the English are at

sea. God knows I hate the French, and have vowed to exterminate that impious nation which denies its God and cuts off the heads of its rulers. But to hate them is not to despise them; I do them justice.”

“ Oh, come, dear lord,” said Emma, with inimitable grace and charm, “ do not be a bird of ill-omen here. The French will be beaten on land by General Mack as they have been beaten at sea by Admiral Nelson. . . . And hark, I hear a whip crack; is it the arrival of the courier the King promised us ? ” and as she spoke the noise repeated, coming nearer and nearer, was distinctly heard, and with it the roll of carriage wheels.

Everyone rose spontaneously to listen; and Acton, visibly excited, at a sign from the Queen sprang to the door just as the carriage was heard to stop at the bottom of the grand staircase. But he quickly returned, and backwards, like a man faced with some impossible apparition.

“ The King ! ” cried he; “ the King ! What does it mean ? ” and almost directly the King entered, in fact, followed by the Duke of Ascoli.

King Ferdinand was in a curious state of mind: his vexation at his defeat was struggling within him against satisfaction at his escape, and he was feeling his natural need of mockery, and mockery embittered in the circumstances he was in. Add to that the physical discomfort of a man, more, of a King, who has just accomplished sixty leagues in a wretched chaise, without food. It was December, moreover.

“ Brrrou ! ” cried he on entering, while rubbing his hands without seeming to notice the persons present. “ It is better here than on the road from Albano; what do you say, d’Ascoli ? ”

Then, as the Queen’s guests confusedly made their bows: “ Good evening, good evening,” he went on, “ I am very glad to find the table laid. Since we left Rome we haven’t had a taste of meat. Some bread and cheese in one’s fingers, how refreshing that is ! Pouah ! What miserable inns there are in my kingdom, and how I pity the poor devils relying on them ! To table, d’Ascoli, to

table! I am outrageously hungry." And the King seated himself without more ado, and made d'Ascoli sit by him.

"Sire, would you be good enough to calm my uneasiness," said the Queen, approaching her august spouse, for whom respect kept all at a distance, "by informing me to what circumstance I owe the happiness of this unexpected return?"

"Madame, you have related to me, I think—to a certainty it is not San Nicandro—the story of Francis I., who, after I don't know what battle, prisoner of I don't know what Emperor, wrote a long letter to his mother, ending with this fine phrase: 'All is lost but honour.' Well, suppose I am arriving from Pavia—I remember now that's the name of the battle—suppose I am arriving from Pavia then, not having been so stupid as to let myself be taken like Francis I., instead of writing to you, I come to tell you myself . . ."

"All is lost, except honour!" cried the Queen in alarm.

"Oh! no, madame," said the King with a harsh laugh, "there is a little variation: all is lost, and even honour!"

"Oh! sire," murmured d'Ascoli, ashamed as a Neapolitan of this cynicism of the King.

"If honour is not lost, d'Ascoli," said Ferdinand, frowning and grinding his teeth, a proof that he was not as insensible to the position as he feigned, "after what were those people running who ran so fast that even paying a ducat and a half to the postboys, I had the greatest trouble to pass them? After disgrace!"

Everyone kept silence; an icy silence; for without as yet knowing anything, everything was already suspected. The King, reaching out his fork, had taken a roasted pheasant from the dish in front of him, had divided it, and had put one half on his plate, and had passed the other to d'Ascoli. Looking round, he saw that everyone was standing, even the Queen.

"Sit down then, sit down then," said he; "things won't go any better for having supped badly." Then,

pouring out a glass of Bordeaux and passing the bottle to d'Ascoli: “To Championnet's health!” said the King. “That's right! There is a man of his word: he promised the Republicans to be in Rome before the twentieth day, and he will be there on the seventeenth. It is he who deserves this excellent Bordeaux, and I who ought to drink aspirino.”

“What, sir! What do you say?” cried the Queen. “Championnet is in Rome?”

“As true as that I am at Caserta.”

“Where we were little expecting the happiness of seeing you so soon again,” said the Queen. “Scarcely three hours ago I received a letter from you announcing a courier who would bring the news of the battle.”

“Well, madame,” returned the King: “here is the courier, and here the news: we have been beaten hollow. What do you say to that, milord Nelson, you, the conqueror of conquerors?”

“I was expressing my fears about half-an-hour before Your Majesty arrived.”

“But what of Mack's forty thousand men, then, sire . . . ?” said the Queen.

“Crushed by Championnet's ten thousand Republicans,” said he. “I say, d'Ascoli, when I think that I wrote to the sovereign pontiff to come on the wings of cherubims to keep Christmas with me at Rome, I hope he won't be too much in a hurry to accept the invitation. Pass me that boar's haunch, Castelcicala; one doesn't dine on half a pheasant when one has eaten nothing for twenty-four hours.” Then, turning to the Queen: “Have you any further questions to put me, madame?” he enquired.

“A last one, sire. I should like to ask Your Majesty the reason of this masquerade?” and Caroline pointed to d'Ascoli, his cross, his ribbons and his stars.

“Ah, to be sure! But first of all, sit down; it annoys me to be seated and eating, while you are all standing round me, and especially their Royal Highnesses,” said the King rising and bowing to the ladies.

"Sire," said Madame Victoire, "whatever may be the circumstances in which we see Your Majesty again, be assured that we are happy to do so."

"Thanks, thanks. And what is this handsome young lieutenant who allows himself to resemble my son?"

"One of the seven guards you have given to their Royal Highnesses," said the Queen; "M. di Cesare is of good Corsican family, sire, and, besides, the epaulette ennobles."

"When he who wears it does not disgrace it. . . . Serve my cousins well, M. di Cesare." The King made a sign, and everyone sat down, although no one ate anything."

"And now," said Ferdinand to the Queen, "d'Ascoli will relate how it is he come to have changed clothes."

"It is not for me, sire, to boast of the honour Your Majesty has done me."

"He calls that an honour! Poor d'Ascoli! Well, I will tell you about it myself. Imagine that it came to my ears that those wretched Jacobins had vowed to hang me if I fell into their hands."

"They would have been quite capable of it."

"Ah! Well, as we left just as we were, without time to disguise ourselves, at Albano I said to d'Ascoli: 'Give me your coat and take mine, then if these wolves of Jacobins catch us they will think you are the King and will let me escape; and when I am safe, you can explain.' But poor d'Ascoli didn't reflect on one thing," added the King, bursting out laughing, "and that is that they wouldn't have given him time to explain, but would have hanged him first and have left the explanation till afterwards."

"Sire, I did think of it," replied the Duke, "and that is why I did it."

Again the King felt touched by devotion so noble and so simple. "D'Ascoli," said he, "keep this coat, those ribbons and orders in remembrance of the day when you offered to save your King's life, and I will keep yours as a remembrance also. If you ever have

a favour to ask or a reproach to make, put on that coat and come to me.”

“ Bravo, sire,” cried di Cesare, “ that is something like a reward ! ”

“ Young man,” said Madame Adelaïde, “ do you forget that you have the honour to speak to a King ? ”

“ Pardon, Your Highness, it was never more present to my mind, for I have never seen a King greater.”

“ Ah ! Ah ! ” said Ferdinand. “ There’s some good in that young man. Come here ! What is your name ? ”

“ Di Cesare, sire.”

“ Di Cesare, I make you a captain. Monsieur Acton, see he gets his brevet to-morrow; and add a present of a thousand ducats.”

“ Sire,” said Nelson, “ permit me to felicitate you; you have been twice a king this evening.”

“ For the days when I forget to be one, milord,” replied Ferdinand; then, turning to the Duke, “ Well, d’Ascoli, is it a bargain ? ”

“ Yes, sire, and the gratitude is all on my side. But might I ask Your Majesty to return me a little snuff box from my pocket in exchange for this letter from His Majesty the Emperor of Austria, of which Your Majesty has read only the first line ? ”

The King took the letter, and opening it mechanically, began to read, but at the second or third line his expression suddenly changed, and visibly darkened.

The Queen and Acton exchanged a look, and eyed the letter with avidity, the King continuing to read with increasing agitation.

“ I hope there is no bad news,” said the Queen.

“ Oh, no; something I was not expecting, that’s all.”

At that moment a footman approached the King and said something in a low tone, to which the King replied : “ Good, and tell Ferrari not to budge. I shall want him in a quarter of an hour.” Then, turning to the Queen, “ Madame,” said he, “ you will excuse my leaving you, but, as you may imagine, I need repose,” and addressing the aged Princesses, “ Ladies, I had hoped to offer you a safer and more durable hospitality, but I shall have

no uneasiness on your Royal Highnesses' account so long as you have for bodyguard Captain di Cesare and his companions." He then took leave of Nelson, saying that he counted on him, and on d'Ascoli, and finally turning to the English ambassador: "Sir William Hamilton," he went on, "you will remember that, like Pilate, I washed my hands of anything that might happen?"

"Perfectly, sire."

"Well, it concerns me no longer; it concerns those who have acted without consulting me, and who, when they did consult me, did not desire to listen to my advice." And having enveloped with the same reproachful look the Queen and Acton, he went out.

The Queen approached Acton quickly. "Did you hear?" said she. "He spoke Ferrari's name after having read the Emperor's letter."

"I heard, madame; but Ferrari knows nothing; he was in a swoon the whole time."

"No matter! it will be prudent to rid ourselves of that man."

"Well," said Acton; "he will be got rid of."

The King had sent for Cardinal Ruffo, who was awaiting him in his apartment, as Ferdinand hurriedly entered crying, "First of all, pardon, my dear Cardinal, for having waked you up at two in the morning, but never have I had more need of my friend's devotion."

"Your Majesty honours me. I presume that General Mack is defeated, and I am not surprised."

"But why did you advise war then?"

"Your Majesty will recall that it was on the one condition that the Emperor of Austria would march on the Mincio at the same time that Your Majesty marched on Rome; but it seems that he did not do so."

"No, and thereby hangs a mystery. You perfectly remember the Emperor's letter I showed you, saying that he would take the field as soon as I was in Rome; well, now study this other letter that I received there just as I was putting my foot in the stirrup, and which I have only just read through, and see if you can make

anything of it, sorcerer that you are,” and he handed the letter to the Cardinal, who began, “ My dear brother and cousin, uncle and father-in-law, ally and confederate ”

“ Go on,” interrupted the King, as he stopped.

The Cardinal continued: “ In the first place, permit me to felicitate you on your triumphant entry into Rome. The God of battles has protected you, and I return him thanks for the protection he has accorded you; that is all the more fortunate as there seems to be a great misunderstanding between us. . . . ”

The Cardinal looked at the King and continued: “ You tell me in the letter that you do me the honour to write me to announce your victories that I have only on my part to keep my promise as you have kept yours; and you tell me clearly that this promise I made you was to begin a campaign directly you should be in Rome. . . ”

“ You remember perfectly, don't you, Your Eminence, that my nephew, the Emperor, made that engagement? besides,” continued the King, who while the Cardinal was reading had opened his portfolio and had taken out the first missive, “ we are about to judge of that: here is my dear nephew's letter; we will compare the two. Go on, go on.”

The Cardinal continued: “ Not only I did not promise that, but, on the contrary, I wrote to you positively that I should not begin a campaign till the arrival of General Souvorov and his forty thousand Russians, that is to say towards the approaching month of April. I am the more sure of what I say, my dear uncle and father-in-law, that, in accordance with the advice given me by Your Majesty, I wrote the letter that I had the honour to address to you entirely in my own hand, and that I might depart in nothing from what I had the honour to say to Your Majesty, I had a copy made by my secretary. I send you this copy so that you can compare it with the original and assure yourself with your own eyes that there could not have been, in my phrases, any ambiguity to lead you into such an error. And as I had the honour to tell Your Majesty, I am

doubly happy that Providence has blessed your arms; for if, instead of being victorious, you had been defeated, it would have been impossible for me, without failing in my engagements with my Prussian confederates, to go to your help, and I should have been obliged, to my great regret, to abandon you to your bad fortune; this would have been a great disappointment, which, happily, Providence has spared me in granting victory. And now receive, my dear brother and cousin——”

“*Et cœtera, et cœtera!*” interrupted the King. “Ah! . . . And now, my dear Cardinal, let us look at the copy of the pretended letter, of which, luckily, I have preserved the original.”

The copy was, in fact, enclosed in the letter. Ruffo had it in his hand, and he read it. It was in truth a copy of the despatch which had been unsealed by the Queen and Acton, and which, as it did not appear to second their desire, had been replaced by the forged letter which the King had in his hand ready to compare with the copy sent him by Francis II. Our readers will remember the contents of the original despatch, and can therefore judge of the King’s amazement as the Cardinal read aloud to him first the copy of the original despatch and then the forged letter which he had taken from his portfolio, and the contents of which were so diametrically different. The reading finished, the Cardinal became pensive.

“Well, Your Eminence; what do you think of it?” said the King.

“That the Emperor is right, but that Your Majesty is not wrong.”

“Which means?”

“That beneath it all there is, as Your Majesty has said, some terrible mystery perhaps; more than a mystery, some treason.”

“Treason; and in whose interest was it to betray me?”

“Let us try to discover. I ask no better than to be Your Majesty’s sleuthhound. Jupiter found Ferrari . . . and, by-the-bye, it would not be a bad thing to question Ferrari a little.”

“ It was my first idea; I have had him sent for,” and the King rang, and told his footman to fetch the courier.

“ Your Majesty told me you were sure of this man ? ” said the Cardinal.

“ I said I thought I was sure.”

“ Well, I will go further,” returned Ruffo. “ I am quite sure.”

Ferrari appeared on the threshold, booted, spurred and ready to set out.

“ Come here, my good man,” said the King.

“ At Your Majesty’s orders. Despatches, sire ? ”

“ It is not a question of despatches this evening, my friend, but merely of answering our questions.”

“ Question him, Cardinal.”

“ My friend,” said Ruffo to the courier, “ the King has the greatest confidence in you.”

“ I believe I have merited it by fifteen years of good and loyal service.”

“ That is why the King begs you to exert your memory, and desires through me to warn you that it concerns a very important matter. No doubt you recollect the smallest details of your journey to Vienna ? Was it indeed the Emperor who himself gave you the letter you brought to the King ? ”

“ It was the Emperor himself, as I have already had the honour of telling His Majesty.”

“ Where did you put the Emperor’s letter ? ”

“ In this pocket,” said Ferrari, opening his jacket.

“ Where did you stop ? ”

“ Nowhere, except to change horses.”

“ Where did you sleep ? ”

“ I did not sleep ? ”

“ Hum ! ” said the Cardinal ; “ but you told us of an accident.”

“ In the courtyard of the castle, monseigneur, where I fainted.”

“ Where did you come to yourself ? ”

“ In the dispensary.”

“ How long were you unconscious ? ”

“ My horse fell under me at about one o’clock in the

morning. When I came to it was daybreak, about half-past five."

"Who was with you then?"

"M. Richard, the Captain-General's secretary, and the surgeon from Santa Maria."

"You did not suspect anyone of having touched your letter?"

"The first thing I did was to feel for it. I examined the seal and envelope; they seemed to me to be intact."

"Then you had some suspicion?"

"No, monseigneur, I acted instinctively."

"And then?"

"Then, as the surgeon had dressed my wound while I was unconscious, I was given some broth; I came away, and I handed my letter to His Majesty, as you know."

"Yes, my dear Ferrari, and I believe I may assure the King that you acted as a good and loyal servant throughout. This is all we had to ask of you, is it not, sire?"

"Yes," replied Ferdinand.

"His Majesty permits you to withdraw then, and to take the rest of which you must be in need."

"Dare I ask His Majesty if I have abused his kindness in any way?"

"On the contrary, my dear Ferrari," said the King, "you are more than ever the man I trust."

Ferrari withdrew happy.

"Well," asked Ferdinand, "as he told you, Your Eminence, the seal and the envelope were intact."

"It is easy to take the imprint of a seal."

"But then one would have had to forge the Emperor's signature?"

"Not necessarily, sir. Suppose one had had a seal with the head of Marcus Aurelius; one could have melted the wax of the seal by holding it above a taper, have opened the letter, have folded it thus . . ." And Ruffo folded it, actually, as Acton had done.

"Why fold it like that?" enquired the King.

"To preserve the heading and the signature; then,

with some acid, to remove the writing, and, instead of what was there, put what there is at present.”

“ Do you think that possible, Your Eminence ? ”

“ Nothing easier; and I would even say that it is a perfect explanation.”

“ Cardinal! Cardinal! ” said the King, after having attentively examined the letter, “ you are a very clever man. And now, what is to be done, in your opinion ? ”

“ Allow me the remainder of the night for reflection, ” replied Ruffo, “ and to-morrow we will speak of this again.”

“ My dear Ruffo, ” said the King, “ do not forget that if I do not make you Prime Minister it is because I am not the master.”

“ I am so convinced of it, sire, that I am just as grateful to you as if you had.” And, bowing to the King with his customary respect, the Cardinal went out, leaving His Majesty lost in admiration of him.

Scarcely had the King left the dining-hall to confer with Cardinal Ruffo, as just related, than as if he had been the sole link uniting the guests agitated with their various emotions, each hastened to seek his own chamber.

The Queen informed Sir William that after the news now brought by her husband, she had too much need of a friend to let her dear Emma go. Sir William sought his apartment to draw up a report for his Government, and Nelson, with head bent and heart pre-occupied with gloomy forebodings, returned to his room. He, also, like Sir William, had a letter to write, but it was a private one. He was not commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean, but under the orders of Admiral Lord St. Vincent; not a galling inferiority; the admiral treating him rather as a friend than an inferior.

This intimacy between Nelson and his commander-in-chief comes out clearly in their correspondence which is preserved, which reveals in all its details the irresistible progress of Nelson’s mad passion for Lady Hamilton, and which would be Nelson’s excuse in the eyes of posterity, if posterity, which for two thousand years has

condemned the lover of Cleopatra, could reverse its judgment.

Fresh from the impression made by the King's news, no sooner did Nelson enter his apartment than he went straight to his desk, and troubled at thought of the changes, public and private, foreshadowed, began the following letter:—

“ To Admiral Lord St. Vincent.

“ My Dear Lord,

“ The face of events has greatly changed since my last letter dated from Leghorn, and I much fear that His Majesty the King of the Two Sicilies may be on the point of losing one of his kingdoms, and perhaps both.

“ General Mack, as I suspected, and as I think I even told you, was only a braggart who had gained his reputation as a great general, I don't know where, but certainly not on battlefields; to be sure he had under his command a sad army; but who would suppose that sixty thousand men would let themselves be beaten by ten thousand!

“ The Neapolitan officers had not much honour to lose, but they lost all they had.”

Nelson had got thus far with his letter when he heard behind him a noise as of butterfly's wings. He turned and beheld Lady Hamilton. He turned with a joyful exclamation, but Emma, with a charming smile, put a finger to her lips, and, laughing and gracious as a figure of happy silence, signed to him to be quiet. Then, coming to his armchair, she leaned over the back and said in a low voice: “ Follow me, Horatio; our dear Queen is waiting for you and wishes to speak to you before seeing her husband again.”

Nelson sighed, thinking that a few words from London, by changing his destination, might part him from this sorceress, whose every gesture, word and caress was a fresh link in the chain by which he was already bound; he rose unsteadily from his seat, attacked by that dizziness he always had, when, after a short absence he saw once more that dazzling beauty.

“ Lead me,” said he; “ you know that I am blind to everything as soon as I see you.”

Emma detached the gauze scarf wound round her head which she used both as hood and veil, as one may see in Isabey's miniatures, and throwing him an end which he seized and carried feverishly to his lips :

“ Come, my dear Theseus,” said she, “ here is the thread of the labyrinth if you must abandon me like another Ariadne. Only, I warn you that should such a misfortune happen, I should not let myself be consoled by anyone, even by a god ! ”

Nelson followed her; had she led him to hell he would have gone down into it with her.

The Queen was sitting on a sofa in the boudoir which separated Emma's room from hers. There was an angry light in her eyes.

“ Come, Nelson, my defender,” said she, indicating a place at her side, “ I have need indeed that the sight of and contact with a hero may console me for our disgrace. . . . Did you see that crowned buffoon, the messenger of his own shame? Did you hear him mocking at his own cowardice? Ah! Nelson, Nelson, it is mournful when one is a proud and courageous woman to have for a spouse a King who knows how to wield neither sceptre nor sword.”

Emma, seated on cushions at the Queen's feet, bent upon him whom it was her mission to fascinate her most magnetic looks, and fingered his cross and ribbons; while Nelson responded, “ The fact is, madame, that the King is a great philosopher.”

“ What? ” cried the Queen, “ a man without dignity or heart who would have let d'Ascoli be hanged in mistake for himself without saying a word? And that I, daughter of Marie Thérèse, should be his wife! It is enough to make one doubt of Providence. Oh, if I were a man, if I wore a sword ! ”

“ It could not be better than this,” said Emma, playing with Nelson's, “ and, from the moment that this protects you, you have no need of another, thank God.”

Nelson laid his hand on Emma's head and gazed at her with an expression of infinite love.

"Alas! dear Emma," said he; "I also have my fears."

"You?" demanded Emma.

"Oh, I guess what he desires to say," cried the Queen, carrying her handkerchief to her eyes; "Oh, I weep, but with tears of rage . . ."

"Yes, but I do not guess," cried Emma. "Nelson, what do you mean by your fears; you must explain!" And, throwing an arm round his neck, and raising herself gracefully by it, she kissed his scarred forehead.

"I only think of one fear," she added; "that of being parted from you."

"You see then that you have guessed, Emma."

"To part!" cried she, with an admirably assumed expression of terror; "and who could part us now?"

"Oh, Admiralty orders; a caprice of Mr. Pitt; could they not send me to capture Martinique, as they sent me to Calvi, Teneriffe, Aboukir?"

"But you would not obey such an order, I hope? An order to leave me?"

"Emma! Emma! do you not see that you are placing me between my duty and my love. . . . That is to make of me a traitor or to drive me to despair."

"Well," replied Emma, "I admit that you cannot urge our mutual passion to His Majesty George III., but you could say: 'My King, I do not wish to leave a Queen of whom I am the sole support, the sole defender;' and if you, a subject, cannot speak thus, his foster-brother, Sir William, can."

"Nelson," said the Queen; "perhaps I am very egotistical, but, if you do not protect us, we are lost; and when it is a question of saving a kingdom, do you not think a man of heart like you may risk something?"

"You are right, madame," replied Nelson; "I was thinking only of my love, my heart's polar star. Your Majesty makes me very happy in showing me devotion where I saw but a passion. This very night I will finish a letter to Lord St. Vincent begging and praying him

to attach me to your service; he will understand, he will write to the Admiralty."

"Do you realise, Nelson," the queen went on, "how much we need you, and what immense services you can render us! In all probability we shall be obliged to leave Naples and go into exile."

"But if the King wished"

The Queen shook her head, and smiled sadly.

"No, Nelson," she said. "The Neapolitans hate me; they are a race jealous of all talent, beauty and courage; they hate Acton because he was born in France; Emma because she was born in England; me because I was born in Austria. Suppose that if by a courageous effort of which he is incapable the King rallies the débris of the army and checks the Jacobins in the Abruzzi, the Jacobins here will profit by the absence of the troops and rise, and then the horrors of France in 1792 and 1793 will be repeated. The King is shielded by his nationality, his lazzaroni adore him, but we others are lost. Would it not be a great rôle reserved for you by Providence, dear Nelson, should you be able to do for me what none of her protectors were able to do for my sister the Queen of France?"

"It would be glory too great, an eternal glory to which I do not aspire, madame," replied Nelson.

"Then should you not give due weight to this," the Queen went on, "that it is through our devotion to England that we are compromised? If, faithful to its treaties with the Republic, the Government of the Two Sicilies had refused you permission to take in water, stores and to repair your damage at Syracuse, you would have been obliged to revictual at Gibraltar, and would not have found the French fleet at Aboukir."

"True, madame, and in that case I should have been lost myself."

"Finally," continued the Queen, "was it not à propos of the fêtes we gave in our enthusiasm for you that this war burst out? Ah, Nelson, the fate of the kingdom and sovereigns of the Two Sicilies is bound up with you. It will be said in the future: 'They were abandoned by

all, by their allies, by their friends, by their relations; they had the world against them; but Nelson was for them, Nelson saved them.' " And, on pronouncing these words, the Queen held out her hand, which Nelson took, and kneeling, kissed.

"Madame," said he, becoming enthusiastic at the Queen's flattery, "will Your Majesty grant me one thing?"

"You have the right to ask everything from those who will owe all to you."

"Then, I ask your royal word that on the day you leave Naples, Nelson's ship and no other shall guide to Sicily your sacred person."

"Oh, that, I swear it, Nelson; and I add that, wherever I shall be, my sole, my only, my eternal friend, my dear Emma will be with me." And the Queen took Emma's head in her two hands and kissed her upon the eyes.

"My word is pledged to you, madame," said Nelson. "From this moment your friends are my friends, and your enemies my enemies; and even had I to lose myself in saving you, I will save you."

"Oh!" cried Emma; "you are truly the knight of kings and the champion of thrones! You are truly such as I have dreamed, the man to whom I should give all my love and all my heart!" And this time it was to her lover's lips that the modern Circe set her own.

At this moment there was a gentle tap at the door.

"Go in there, dear friends of my heart," said the Queen, pointing to Emma's room; "Acton is coming to give me an answer."

Nelson, intoxicated with praise, love, and pride, drew Emma into that room with its perfumed atmosphere, the door seeming to shut upon them of itself.

In a moment the Queen's expression changed, as if she had dropped a mask. "Come in," she said in a short voice, and as Acton entered, "Well, who was waiting for His Majesty?"

"Cardinal Ruffo, and they sent for Ferrari."

“ I suspected as much. All the more reason, Acton, for doing what you know of.”

“ It shall be done on the first opportunity. Has Your Majesty any other commands? ”

“ No,” replied the Queen.

Acton bowed and went out.

CHAPTER XVII

A SERVANT OF THE QUEEN AND A SERVANT OF THE KING

It will be remembered that the King in one of his letters to the Queen had urged that the trial of Nicolino Caracciolo should be hastened on. This was from no philanthropic motive. The King had his own reasons for hating him, one of them his relationship to the handsome Duke of Rocca-Romana, whom scandal connected with the Queen, another that Nicolino, half French by birth and wholly French in his ideas, had been one of the first to offend the King's eyes by leaving off powder, sacrificing his queue, and letting his whiskers grow; and had actually exchanged knee breeches for trousers.

But the King's suspicions, vague and instinctive as they were, were well founded, since Nicolino was involved in that great conspiracy extending to Rome, the object of which was, by inviting the French to Naples, to bring in with them light, progress and liberty. Nor was the Marquis Vanni, who had charge of Nicolino's case, to be blamed for neglect of the royal wishes. He had the man safe, he had proofs of his guilt, he was sure he could not escape him; but he had feline instincts, he was merely amusing himself a little with his victim before cutting off his head. And even so, with all his advantages, armed with the law, torture and the scaffold, the game did not always go as he wished. Nicolino Caracciolo held firmly to a policy of non-avowal, and to all the questions put to him by Vanni as regards all those matters not of general knowledge, replied in every

interrogatory by putting questions himself. These questions were of such a personal kind that Vanni did not even dare to let the clerk record them, and finally, having threatened the prisoner to put him to the torture if he continued to make game of justice in this matter, he arrived at St. Elmo on the morning of the ninth of December, quite decided, if Nicolino persisted in his impertinences, to put his threat into execution. He was, of course, ignorant of the secret return of the King from Rome, which was only known so far to the intimate circle at Caserta.

Vanni was escorted by Master Donato, the Naples executioner, with two of his assistants, as well as by his clerk, a man so silent in his devotion to his master that he appeared to be his very shadow. For this solemn occasion of the revival of torture in Naples, fallen into disuse for sixty-five years for the benefit of a member of one of the first families of the kingdom, orders had been given to the Governor of the Castle of St. Elmo to get ready the old torture chamber, in which process seven hundred ducats had actually been expended.

At the news of Vanni's arrival the Governor accordingly came to meet him and conduct him into this ancient museum of pain, where he was able to study a fine collection of instruments, drawn for the most part from the arsenals of ecclesiastical inquisition. By the care of the Governor, each instrument was ready for use.

Leaving Master Donato and his assistants in this funereal apartment, lighted only by torches clamped to the walls, the Governor and Vanni passed into an adjoining room, railed off by an iron grille, before which hung a heavy curtain of black serge. This room had been that of the secret tribunal, abandoned at the same time as the torture chamber; no daylight reached it; and it was furnished only by a table covered with a green cloth, lighted by two candelabra, and supplied with paper, pens and ink; an armchair for the judge, a stool for the prisoner, and a little table for the clerk; a most forbidding-looking crucifix carved out of the trunk of

an oak; and a lamp hanging from the ceiling, which lit up this terrible agony on the cross.

Vanni, after inspecting everything in silence, complimented the Governor on his zeal, of which he promised the Queen should hear, and requested him to send the prisoner with an escort; and if it so pleased him, to accompany him himself, that is if he cared to witness the manner in which he, Vanni, would conduct the necessary operations. The Governor thanked him warmly for this permission, and bowing to the ground, withdrew to fetch Nicolino Caracciolo. The short interval which elapsed was employed by the fiscal attorney in putting a judge's robe over his town suit, in covering his long horny head with an enormous wig, which added, he thought, to the majesty of his countenance, and in placing on this wig a lawyer's cap. The clerk began by laying on the table as evidence the two pistols engraved with an N and the Marchioness of San Clemente's letter; and then made the same toilette as his superior, that is, he put on a narrower robe, a smaller wig, a lower cap. After which he sat down at the little table.

The Marquis Vanni took his place at the large one, and prepared himself as effectively as possible to impress Nicolino.

Unfortunately, Nicolino was not easily impressed. He came in smiling and humming a tune, accompanied by four soldiers, and followed by the Governor, and took his seat on the stool with these words:

"Marquis, have you by any chance read '*The Mysteries of Udolpho*'?"

"Sir, we are here to concern ourselves with other matters than novels," replied Vanni.

"Well, I merely wished to observe that in '*The Mysteries of Udolpho*' there is a description of a room exactly like this; it is in that apartment that the chief brigand held his sittings."

Vanni summoned his dignity to his aid.

"Prisoner, you are accused of a plot against the State."

"Oh come! You have relapsed into your mania again."

Vanni stamped impatiently.

"Have you at last made up your mind to answer the questions I am going to put to you?"

"That depends on the questions."

Vanni thereupon, as he had already often done, demanded the accused's age, name, domicile, and finally, "Did you form one of the assembly of conspirators in the ruins of the palace of Queen Joanna on the 22nd-23rd September?"

"I do not know of such a place."

"You do not know the ruins of the palace of Queen Joanna at Pausilippo, almost in front of your house?"

"Pardon, Marquis, I am surprised that an archæologist like you should fall into such an error. You mean to say the palace of Anna Caraffa, wife of the Duke of Medina . . . if this gets rumoured you will be taken for a real Marquis."

"Very well, were you in the ruins of the palace of Anna Caraffa during the night of 22nd-23rd September? Answer yes or no!" insisted the furious Vanni.

"And what the devil should I have gone looking about there for? Don't you remember the awful weather that night? I don't go conspiring when it rains; it is tiresome enough in fine weather."

"Did you that evening lend your great coat to someone?"

"Not so stupid on such a night: if I had had two I should have put one on top of the other."

"Do you recognise these pistols?"

"No," said Nicolino.

"They are marked with an N however."

"Am I the only person in Naples whose name begins with an N?"

"Do you recognise this letter?" And Vanni showed the Marchioness San Clemente's letter to the prisoner.

"Pardon, Marquis, I should like to have a nearer view of it," and he looked at the two soldiers, one on either side of him, saying: "Is it permitted?"

The soldiers drew back; Nicolino approached the table, took the letter and examined it.

"Oh fie! to ask a gallant man if he recognises a woman's letter! Oh, Marquis!" And calmly holding the letter to one of the candelabra, he set fire to it.

Vanni got up, furious: "What are you doing?" cried he.

"I am burning it, as you see; one should always burn women's letters, or the poor creatures will be compromised," and he blew the ashes into Vanni's face and quietly went back to his seat.

"Good," roared Vanni, "he may laugh who laughs last," then, though shaking his snuff-box furiously, he appeared to calm down, and went on: "You are the nephew of Francesco Caracciolo?"

"I have that honour."

"Do you see him often?"

"As often as I can."

"You are aware that he is infected with bad principles?"

"I am aware that he is the most honest man in Naples, and His Majesty's most faithful subject, without excepting you, Marquis."

"Have you heard it said that he had to do with Republicans?"

"Yes, at Toulon, where he fought against them so gloriously that to his various combats with them he owes his rank of admiral."

"Come," said Vanni, as if he were taking a sudden resolution, "I see that you will not speak, and that we shall draw no avowal from you by mildness."

"Nor by force, I warn you."

"Nicolino Caracciolo, my powers as judge are extensive. I warn you that I shall be forced to put you to the torture."

"Do so, Marquis, do so; that will help pass the time," Nicolino yawned.

"Master Donato!" cried the fiscal attorney, "show the torture chamber to the accused."

Master Donato pulled a cord, the curtains parted;

Nicolino could then see the executioner, his two assistants, and the formidable instruments of torture surrounding them.

"Hum," said Nicolino, "this appears to be a very curious collection; can one see it a little nearer?"

"You will see it too nearly, immediately, miserable hardened sinner. Donato, seize the accused."

The grille turned on its hinges, and Donato stepped towards the prisoner.

"The guide?" asked the young man.

"I am the executioner," replied Master Donato.

"To the torture; to the torture!" yelled Vanni.

"Marquis," said Nicolino, "I believe that by being in a hurry you are depriving yourself of the great pleasure of explaining to me the uses of these curious machines; but do you prefer to begin immediately? It is all the same to me."

Vanni lowered his eyes and considered for a moment.

"It shall not be said that I refused delay to an accused, however guilty," he replied, and he forthwith commenced to point out the workings of the *estrapade*, the *cuffia del silenzio*, the red-hot chair, the boot, and the torture by water. Nicolino continued to jest at each explanation.

"Then you refuse to confess," finally demanded Vanni.

"More than ever."

"Reflect that it is no longer a joking matter; I shall begin by the *estrapade*. Executioner, remove the prisoner's coat."

But Nicolino, with the greatest calmness, saved him the trouble, and also took off his waistcoat and shirt.

"Once more, will you confess?" cried Vanni, desperately shaking his snuff-box.

"Has a gentleman two ways of speaking?" returned Nicolino.

"Bind his hands behind his back, attach a weight of a hundred pounds to each foot, and raise him to the ceiling," Vanni directed.

The executioner's assistants threw themselves on Nicolino, bound him and fixed the weights to his feet.

"You won't confess? You won't confess?" cried Vanni approaching the prisoner.

"Yes; come nearer," said Nicolino.

Vanni approached; Nicolino spit in his face.

"Christ!" cried Vanni; "raise him, raise him."

But at that moment the Governor, hurriedly going up to him, said, "A note by express from the Prince of Castelcicala."

Scarcely had Vanni taken the note and cast an eye over it than he turned livid; read it again and became paler still. Then, after a moment's silence, passing his handkerchief over his damp forehead, "Loose the prisoner and take him back to prison," he ordered; "the torture will be another day," and he instantly rushed out of the room, without even speaking to his clerk.

"You are forgetting your shadow," Nicolino called after him.

"A devil's trade!" cried Master Donato. "One is never sure of anything."

Nicolino seemed moved by the executioner's disappointment, and taking three pieces of gold from his pocket, gave them to him, and turning to the Governor, requested to be taken back to prison.

The note received by Vanni had been thus expressed :

"The King arrived to-night. The Neapolitan army is defeated; the French will be here in a fortnight.

"C."

Now the Marquis Vanni had reflected that it was inopportune, just as the French were to enter Naples, to torture a prisoner accused solely of being a partisan of the French. As to Nicolino, who had been threatened with such a severe trial, he returned to dungeon No. 3, without knowing to what fortunate chance he was indebted for getting off so cheaply.

The same hour that saw Nicolino taken back to his cell saw Cardinal Ruffo, faithful to his promise of the night before, entering the King's apartments.

The King was alone with a man of about forty years of age. By an almost imperceptible tonsure lost in a forest of black hair one recognised him for an abbé. For the rest he was a strapping fellow, made one would have thought rather for a carabineer's uniform than for the robe of an ecclesiastic.

Ruffo drew back a step.

"Come in, come in, my dear Cardinal," said the King; "you are not in the way; I present to you the Abbé Pronio. He came but a minute ago from my director, Monseigneur Rossi, Bishop of Nicosia. He can now speak before us both. Relate what has brought you; Cardinal Ruffo is one of my friends."

"One of the best, sire," said the abbé, bowing to the Cardinal. "Who does not know him, the fortifier of Ancona, the inventor of a new furnace to mould bullets!"

"Ah, Cardinal, you were not expecting a compliment on your military exploits."

"No, but I presume," said Ruffo, "that the abbé has not come only for that."

"True, abbé, the Cardinal reminds me that I have business on hand; proceed, we are listening."

"I will be brief, sire. Yesterday, at nine in the evening, I was at my nephew's, a master of the post. Ten minutes previously a courier had passed, had ordered horses urgently for a very great nobleman, and had gone on laughing. I was seized with curiosity; and when the carriage stopped, I approached it, and to my great amazement recognised the King. The King, whom one supposed to be in Rome, was returning alone in a post-chaise, accompanied by a single nobleman who was wearing the King's clothes, while the King was wearing the clothes of that nobleman; it was an event. I questioned the postillions and heard that there had been a great battle, that the Neapolitans had been defeated, and that the King—how shall I say it, sire?" the abbé asked, bowing respectfully—"and that the King"

"Cut away"

"Then the idea occurred to me that if the Neapolitans

were really in flight they were running with one accord to Naples, and that therefore there was but one way of stopping the French, who would be, if not stopped, on their heels."

"Let us hear it," said Ruffo.

"It was to raise the Abruzzi and the labourers in insurrection, and since there was no longer an army to oppose them with, to oppose to them a people."

Ruffo looked at Pronio. "Are you by chance a man of genius, abbé?" he asked.

"Who knows?" replied the abbé.

"Let him go on; let him go on," cried the King.

"So this morning I have come straight to the King as from His Majesty's confessor."

"Are you acquainted with him?" asked Ruffo.

"I have never seen him, but I hoped that the King would pardon my lie for my good intentions; if the King adopts my plan of an insurrection, no train of powder would ignite more quickly; I proclaim a holy war, and before a week is out I raise the whole country from Aquila to Teano."

"And you will do that singly?" demanded Ruffo.

"No, monseigneur; I should have two assistants—one is Gaetano Mammone, better known as the miller of Sora."

"Haven't I heard that name in connection with the murder of those two Jacobins della Torre?" enquired the King.

"It is possible, sire," replied the Abbé Pronio. "Gaetano Mammone is rarely absent when anyone is killed within ten leagues of him; he scents blood."

"You know him?" asked Ruffo.

"He is my friend, Eminence."

"And who is the other?"

"A young brigand of the greatest promise, sire, called Michael Pezza; but he has taken the name of Fra Diavolo. Though scarcely one and twenty years of age, he is already leader of a band of thirty men in the mountains of Mignano. He was in love with a young girl whose father gave her to another; he killed his rival, and

afterwards carried off the girl, who now adores him and is as great a brigand as he."

"And these are the men you think of employing?" asked the King.

"Sire, one does not raise an insurrection with seminarists."

"The abbé is right, sire," said Ruffo.

"So be it, and with these means you promise to succeed, and will raise the Abruzzi and the field labourers."

"I answer for it; I know everyone, and everyone knows me; but I am counting on my two friends, captains as I am; they are as valuable as I, and I no less than they. Only let the King deign to sign commissions for us to prove to the peasants that we are acting in his name, and I will answer for everything."

"Oh, oh," said the King; "I am not scrupulous, but to choose as my captains two such fellows! You must give me ten minutes for reflection, abbé."

"Ten, twenty, thirty, sire. The matter is too advantageous for Your Majesty to refuse, and His Eminence is too devoted to the interests of the crown not to advise it."

"Well, abbé," said the King, "leave us alone for a moment; we will discuss your plan."

"I will read my breviary in the ante-chamber," said Pronio, and he bowed and went out.

The King and the Cardinal looked at one another.

"An odd sort of St. Bernard to preach a crusade, eh, Cardinal," said the King.

"Men are scarce. Perhaps he will succeed all the better."

"Yes, but when one is called Ferdinand of Bourbon, how can one sign commissions for a brigand chief and a man who drinks blood as another drinks water?"

"I understand Your Majesty's repugnance still, in the position in which we are but only sign the abbé's, and authorize him to sign the others."

"Ah, with you one is never in a difficulty. Let us recall the abbé."

"No, sire; leave him time to read his breviary; we have other matters on hand at least as pressing. Your Majesty did me the honour to ask my opinion as to the forgery of a certain letter."

"Well?"

"Your Majesty will not dispute the fact that I am detested by the Queen; now I have no wish to make her detest me still more."

"Why do you say this?"

"Apropos of the letter from His Majesty the Emperor of Austria. At what o'clock did you return to Naples with M. Andrew Baker the day he had the honour of dining with you?"

"Between five and six o'clock."

"Well, an hour afterwards the master of the post at Capua was instructed to tell Ferrari when he should come through that he would find Your Majesty at Caserta. Why was Ferrari wanted at Caserta? I do not know. Probably to try to seduce him. We have heard and believe his story that his horse fell, and that he was carried into the dispensary by Acton's secretary, and there it was found convenient to prolong his swoon with the aid of some drops of laudanum. I had no need to ask questions," said the Cardinal, and he drew from his pocket a coffee spoon. "Here," said he, "is the spoon with which it was introduced into his mouth, with a deposit remaining, which proves that he did not lick it, and the sharp and persistent smell of opium indicates the nature of the deposit even after the lapse of a month."

The King gazed at the Cardinal with his usual naive astonishment when anything was beyond him.

"And then?"

"And then, sire, when Ferrari in his swoon was still further lulled by these extra precautions, *someone* took the letter from his pocket, unsealed it by holding the wax above a taper, read the letter, and as it contained the opposite of what was hoped, *someone* removed the writing with oxalic acid. Here is the little bottle still more than half full," and the Cardinal drew from his pocket a little

flask containing a liquid clear as spring water, and evidently distilled, and asking the King for some unimportant letter, he demonstrated with ease the removal of some lines of handwriting, and inserted some others in their place.

“ Well, what happened after that ? ” said the King, sighing when he had inspected the paper.

“ Then, sire, after the substitution of the Emperor’s approval for his refusal, the letter was resealed with a seal like the Emperor’s; only, as this was done by candle-light, it was done with a wax a little paler in colour than the original;” and taking the letter, he pointed out to the King the difference between the two layers of wax on the seal.

“ True,” cried the King, “ quite true.”

“ Besides,” added the Cardinal, “ here is the stick of sealing-wax,” and he laid it beside the spoon and the phial on the table.

“ And how did you get all this evidence,” asked the King, so interested and astonished that he was unwilling to lose a detail.

“ Oh, in the simplest way, sire. I came this morning to the dispensary in search of some medicine, as I often do, but with a certain fixed idea; I found this spoon on the night table, this phial in the glass cupboard, and the sealing wax on the table. Cardinal Richelieu required but three lines of a man’s handwriting to get him hanged.”

“ Yes,” said the King. “ Unfortunately, there are some people one does not hang, whatever they may have done.”

“ And now,” said the Cardinal, looking fixedly at the King, “ if you have any regard for Ferrari, I believe that the air of Naples is very unhealthy for him just now. I am sure of it.”

“ Then it is very simple. I will send him to Vienna. Besides, as you will understand, I want this matter cleared up; so I will return to the Emperor the despatch in which he tells me that he will begin a campaign as

soon as I am in Rome; and I will ask him what he has to say to that."

"And, that no one may suspect anything, Your Majesty sets out for Naples to-day, telling Ferrari to come to me to-night at St. Lencio, and to take my orders as if they were Your Majesty's. I will write to the Emperor in Your Majesty's name, telling him of your doubts, and begging him to send the reply to me. I will map out Ferrari's route that he may avoid the French."

"You are prodigious, my dear Cardinal! Nothing is impossible to you."

"Then, sire, as time presses, let us return to the Abbé Pronio."

The King summoned a footman to fetch Pronio.

The abbé did not keep him waiting, and whether he had been reading his breviary or no, entered with the same easy bearing as before, and saluting the King and Cardinal said: "I await His Majesty's commands."

"My commands will be easy to follow, my dear abbé. I order you to do all you have promised."

"I am ready, sire."

"Now, let us understand one another."

The meaning of these words was evidently not clear to Pronio, who looked questioningly at the King.

"I am asking you," said Ferdinand, "what favours you are expecting from me."

"To serve Your Majesty, and, if need be, to die for you."

"You do not ask for an archbishopric, a bishopric, not the least little abbey?"

"If when the French are driven out and all is over, I have served Your Majesty well, you will reward me; if ill, you will have me shot."

"Then," said the King, "it is simply a matter of giving you a commission?"

"One to me, sire, one to Fra Diavolo, one to Mam-mone. I answer for them as for myself."

"Draw up the abbé's commission, Eminence."

Ruffo seated himself at a table, wrote a few lines and read as follows:—

“ I, Ferdinand of Bourbon, King of the Two Sicilies and Jerusalem,

“ Declare

“ Having entire confidence in the eloquence, patriotism and military talents of the Abbe Pronio,

“ that I name him

“ *my Captain* in the Abruzzi and

“ if necessary in all other parts of my kingdom ;

“ approving

“ All he will do for the defence of the territory of this kingdom and to prevent the French from penetrating it, authorize him to sign commissions like this in favour of two persons whom he will judge worthy of seconding him in this noble task promising to recognize for leaders of the people the two persons whom he will have chosen.

“ In witness of which we have given to him the present commission,

“ In our Castle of Caserta, this 10th December, 1798.”

“ Is that it, sir ? ” enquired the King of Pronio, after having heard the Cardinal read the above.

“ Yes, sire, except that Your Majesty has not desired to assume responsibility in signing commissions for the two captains I had the honour to recommend.”

“ No, I have given you the right to sign them.”

“ I thank Your Majesty ; and if you will sign and seal at the foot of this, I shall have but to present my most humble acknowledgements and to set out to execute your orders.”

As the King was signing, the Cardinal approached him and said a few words in a low voice.

The King turned to Pronio. “ The Cardinal believes,” said he, “ that better than anyone you would be able to draw up a proclamation addressed to the people of the two provinces in which you are to command.”

“ His Eminence gives good advice, sire; am I to speak in the King’s name or in my own ? ”

"In the King's name, sir, in the King's name," Ruffo hastened to answer.

Pronio acknowledged this permission, not only to write in his sovereign's name, but also to seat himself in his presence, with a bow; and without hesitation, without erasure, from a flowing source he wrote:

"While in the Christian capital of the world, employed in re-establishing the Holy Church, the French, with whom I have done everything to remain at peace, threaten to penetrate into the Abruzzi. I risk my person therefore, in spite of the danger I run crossing their lines to regain my endangered capital; but, once at Naples, I shall march against them with a numerous army to exterminate them. Meanwhile, let the people rush to their arms, let them fly to the aid of religion, let them defend their king, or rather their father, who is ready to sacrifice his life to preserve to his subjects their altars and their goods, the honour of their women and their liberty! Whoever will not repair to the standards of the holy war will be considered a traitor to his country, whoever shall abandon them after having enrolled himself will be punished as a rebel and as an enemy of the Church and State.

"Rome, 7 December, 1798."

Pronio handed his proclamation to the King to read. But he, passing it to the Cardinal, said: "I do not understand very well, my Eminence."

Pronio, who had not paid much attention to the expression in the King's face, as he read, followed with the greatest attention the effect his effort was producing in the Cardinal's, who, as he read, raised his eyes to Pronio two or three times, and each time saw the new captain's gaze rivetted on him.

"I was not deceived in you, sir," said he to Pronio when he had finished; "you are an able man!" Then, addressing the King, "Sire," continued he, "no one in your kingdom, I venture to say, could have composed such an adroit proclamation, and Your Majesty can sign it boldly, without changing a syllable."

The King signed.

“And now, sire,” said Ruffo, “while you have the pen in your hand, you can add beneath your signature:

“Captain Joseph Pronio is authorised, for me and in my name, to distribute this proclamation, and to see that the intentions therein expressed by me be faithfully carried out.”

The King, without making any objection, wrote the words dictated by Ruffo.

“It is done,” he said.

“Now, sire,” said the Cardinal, “while M. Pronio makes us a copy of this proclamation, Your Majesty will sign a cheque to his order for ten thousand ducats.”

“Monseigneur!” said Pronio.

“Ten thousand ducats! . . . Eh! Eh!” said the King.

“Sire, I beg Your Majesty”

“Very well,” said the King. “On Corradino?”

“No, on Baker and Co.; it is safer and especially quicker.” The King drew the cheque and signed it.

“Here is the duplicate of His Majesty’s proclamation,” said Pronio, handing the Cardinal his copy.

“Now,” said Ruffo to him; “you see the confidence the King puts in you. Here is a cheque for ten thousand ducats; go to a printing office and order as many copies of this proclamation as can be made in twenty-four hours; the first ten thousand will be posted to-day in Naples, if it is possible before the King arrives. It is mid-day: they can be ready at four o’clock. Take away ten, twenty, thirty thousand; distribute them in abundance, and before to-morrow evening ten thousand will have been spread about!”

“And what shall I do with the remainder of the money, Monseigneur?”

“You will buy rifles, powder and shot.”

Pronio, at the height of joy, was about to rush from the room.”

“What!” said Ruffo, “do you not see, captain, that the King gives you his hand to kiss?”

"Oh! sire!" cried Pronio, kissing it, "the day I die for Your Majesty I shall not be out of your debt."

And he went out, ready indeed to die for the King.

The King evidently wanted him to be gone; he scarcely understood the part he had played throughout this scene. "Well," said he, when the door shut, "it is still probably San Nicandro's fault, but devil take me if I understand your enthusiasm for that proclamation, in which there is not a word of truth."

"Ah! sire, it is just because of that and because neither Your Majesty nor I would have ventured to do it, that I admire it."

"Then," said Ferdinand, "explain it to me that I may see if it is worth my ten thousand ducats."

"Your Majesty would not be rich enough to pay for it, if its full value were paid."

"Ass's head!" said Ferdinand, striking his forehead.

"If your Majesty will deign to follow me on this copy," said Ruffo, "I think I can make the matter clear. While Your Majesty was *peacefully* at Rome employed in *re-establishing the Holy Church*, in the sole interests of the Holy Father, the French with whom you had done everything to remain at peace, *threatened to penetrate the Abruzzi.*"

"Ah!" said the King.

"Thus the bad faith and the treason is their's," went on the Cardinal. "In spite of their ambassador's threats, you go to Rome full of confidence in their loyalty, and while quietly there, the French attack you unawares, and defeat Mack. Nothing extraordinary, you will agree, sire, if taken unawares. Your Majesty adds: '*I risk my person, therefore, in spite of the danger I run, crossing their lines, to regain my endangered capital.*' You understand, sire? You do not flee before the French; on the contrary, you cross their lines; you do not fear the danger—you confront it. And why do you so temerarily expose your sacred person? To protect your capital; in short, to march against the enemy with a numerous army, to exterminate the French."

"Enough," cried the King, bursting out laughing; "enough, my dear Cardinal! I quite understand. You are right, my Eminence, thanks to this proclamation, I shall pass for a hero. Who the devil would have thought it when I changed clothes with Ascoli in an inn in Albano? Decidedly, you are right, and your Pronio is a man of genius. Look, he has forgotten his book; and it is not a breviary either," said the King, reading the title, "it is *The Prince*, by Machiavelli."

"Oh!" said Ruffo; "you can keep it, sire, to study in your turn; he has nothing further to learn from it."

CHAPTER XVIII

FIRST FRUITS OF THE KING'S DUCATS

ON the same day, towards four or five o'clock in the afternoon, one of those dull and threatening noises, like those which precede storms and earthquakes, rising from the old quarters of Naples, gradually began spreading to the whole town.

Men issuing in groups from the printing office of Florio Giordani, in the Largo Mercatello, their left shoulders laden with large printed sheets, their right arms furnished with a brush and a pailful of paste, were pervading the various parts of the city, each leaving behind him a series of posters about which gathered the curious, and by help of which one could follow its track throughout Naples. This series of posters was the proclamation of King Ferdinand, or rather of Captain Pronio, of which we have just had the history; and this continually increasing noise, rising from every part of the city, was the effect of reading it upon the inhabitants. By the same stroke the Neapolitans were learning of the return of the King, whom they believed to be at Rome, and of the invasion of the French, whom they believed to be in retreat.

In the midst of this slightly confused account of events, and the confusion was a stroke of genius, the King appeared as the sole hope of the country as the guardian angel of the kingdom. Had he not risked life and liberty to come and die with his faithful Neapolitans?

Thus, in front of each poster, one saw a crowd dis-

cussing it, the small number of those able to read holding forth to the others, who listened with steadfast look, strained ears, and open-mouthed.

At the Old Market, where there was less education than anywhere else, a large group had formed at the butcher's door, and in the midst of it might be noticed our friend, Michael the Fool, who was reading out the proclamation to the astonished crowd.

"What I see most clearly in all this," the butcher was saying, with his rough good sense, fixing on Michael his burning eye, the only one left him by the terrible gash he had got from Salvato at Mergellina. "What I see most clearly is that these wolves of republicans, may hell confound them! have given the bastinado to General Mack, and, if so, the French—may the last die of the plague!—are marching on Naples and will perhaps be here in less than a fortnight."

"Yes," said Michael, "for I see in the proclamation that they are invading the Abruzzi, evidently the road to Naples; but it depends on us not to let them do it."

"But how to prevent them?" enquired the butcher.

"Nothing easier," said Michael. "You, for example, by taking your large knife, Pagliuccella his big gun, and I my great sword, each of us in short by taking something and marching against them."

"That is very easy to say," grumbled the butcher.

"And still easier to do, my butcher friend. It only needs one thing—courage. I know for certain that there are only ten thousand of the French; now at Naples there are sixty thousand lazzaroni, sound, strong, with good arms, good legs and good eyes."

"With good eyes," said the butcher, seeing in Michael's words a personal allusion.

"Very well," Michael went on, "let us each arm ourselves with something, if only a stone and a sling, and let us each kill the sixth part of a Frenchman, and then there will be no more of them; and it will be especially easy for you, butcher; who, as you tell us, fought one against six."

"It is true," said the butcher, "that everyone who falls into my hands"

"Yes," replied Michael; "but it won't do to wait for that, because then we shall be in theirs; we must go to meet them. Well now, one man is as good as another. Six men who are afraid of one man are cowards."

"He is right! Michael is right!" cried several voices.

"Well then," said Michael, "if I am right, prove it to me. I ask no better than to die; let those who wish to die with me, say so."

"I! I! I! We! We!" cried fifty voices. "Will you be our chief, Michael?"

"Faith, I ask no better."

"Long live Michael! Michael for ever! Long live our Captain!" cried a great number of voices.

"Good! Here I am a captain already," said Michael. "Will you be my lieutenant, Pagliuccella? And let those who want me to be their leader go and wait for me in Carbonara Street with what arms they can get; as for me, I am off to fetch my sword."

At this there was a movement in the crowd, and about a hundred men set off to find a weapon, without which one could not enter Captain Michael's ranks.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the town, at the foot of the Mount of the Capucini, Fra Pacifico, returning from his collecting with his friend Jacobino, had also observed the proclamations being pasted up; had approached one, spelled it out with difficulty, and at its unexpected contents, his warlike ardour had sprung up fiercer than ever at seeing these Jacobins, whom he execrated, ready to cross the frontiers of the kingdom. So, he had struck the ground furiously with his laurel stick, had got up on a milestone to speak, and, holding Jacobino by his bridle, in the midst of a religious silence, he had explained to the huge circle his popularity gathered round him, what the French were; that is, according to him, that they were all infidels, sacrilegious,

pillagers, despoilers of women, cut-throats of children, who did not believe that the Madonna of Pie-di-Grotta moved her eyes, and that the hair of the Christ of the Carmine grew so fast that it had to be cut every year; Fra Pacifico affirmed that the French were all the devil's bastards, and, as a proof of it, that all those he had seen, had, on some part of the body, the imprint of a claw; a sure sign that they were all destined to fall into those of Satan. It was therefore urgent, by every possible means, to prevent their entering Naples, or Naples, turned from top to bottom, would vanish from the earth's surface, as if buried under the ashes of Pompei, or the lava of Herculaneum.

Fra Pacifico's discourse, and especially the peroration had had the greatest effect on his hearers. Enthusiastic cries arose in the crowd; two or three voices had asked, if, in the event of the Neapolitans rising against the French, Fra Pacifico would march in person against the enemy. Fra Pacifico had then replied that not only he, but his ass Jacobino were at the service of King and altar, and that, on this humble mount, chosen by Christ to make his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, he would undertake to guide to victory those who desired to fight with him.

Then cries, "We are ready! We are ready!" had resounded. Fra Pacifico asked but five minutes, had rapidly ascended to the Capucin Monastery to deposit Jacobino's load in the kitchen, and had actually re-appeared to the second, mounted on his ass, and at a gallop, had returned to take his place in the circle which had chosen him.

It was nearly six o'clock in the evening, and without Ferdinand having the least idea of it, Naples was in the state of exasperation we have described. When he, with lowered head, and asking himself what reception was awaiting him in his capital, entered by the Capuan gate, taking care not to add to his disgrace the share of unpopularity borne by the Queen and her favourite, to separate from them at the entrance to the city.

Now it was just in front of the Capuan gate that

Michael, because this is a popular centre, had told his troop to meet him! But his troop had more than doubled on its way, so that more than two hundred and fifty men were obstructing the space before the gate just as the King arrived to cross it.

The King knew very well that he would never have anything to fear among his dear lazzaroni. He was therefore surprised, but no more than that, when, amid such a crowd, by the light of the sparse street lamps, lit at each hundred paces, and the more numerous tapers burning before the madonnas, he saw the glint of swords and rifle barrels; he accordingly leaned out, and touching on the shoulder him who seemed to be the leader:

"Friend," asked he in Neapolitan patois, "could you tell me what is going on here?"

The man turned round and found himself confronting the King. This man was Michael.

"Oh!" cried he, suffocated with joy, amazement, and pride at being touched by him. "Oh! His Majesty! His Majesty King Ferdinand! Long live the King! Long live our Father! Long live the Preserver of Naples!" And the whole troop repeated these cries with one voice.

Whatever cry King Ferdinand had expected to be greeted by on his return to his capital, it certainly was not by this.

"Do you hear them?" he asked the Duke of Ascoli. "What in the world are they singing then?"

"They cry 'Long live the King!' sire," replied the Duke with his customary gravity; "they call you their father and the saviour of Naples."

The cries redoubled.

"Then," said Ferdinand, "since they insist upon it" and half issuing from the door, "Yes, my children," said he, "yes, it is I; yes, it is your King, your father, and, as you justly say, I am coming back to save Naples or to die with you." This promise increased the enthusiasm to a pitch of frenzy.

"Pagliuccella," cried Michael, "run on ahead with a dozen men; some torches, some flambeaux! illuminations!"

"There is no need, my children!" cried the King, who could not endure a very strong light; "there is no need, why make illuminations?" But no one paid any attention to him; Pagliuccella and his men ran on ahead like madmen; and the cries continued.

"Well, well," said the King to d'Ascoli, "I think we had better not thwart them. Let them do it; most assuredly the Abbé Pronio is a clever man." And in fact the cries of Pagliuccella and his lazzaroni had a magical effect; people swarmed out of their houses with torches or tapers; all the windows were illuminated; when the Rue Fona was reached, it was seen to be lit up from end to end. The result was that the King's entry, which had seemed as if about to be made under the silence and shame of a defeat, had, on the contrary, all the brilliance of a victory, all the noisy din of a triumph. At the steps of the Bourbon Museum, the people could not permit their King to be drawn by horses any further; they took out the horses from the carriage and harnessed themselves to it. At Toledo Street a second crowd of at least two or three hundred persons, no less enthusiastic and no less noisy, joined Michael's. It was led by Fra Pacifico, riding his ass; his laurel stick on his shoulder like another Hercules with his club; Toledo Street literally streamed with illuminations; and the carriage could hardly get along so great was the crowd bringing the runaway King to his palace.

Meanwhile the Queen had reached the palace by deserted streets, and had found it dumb and almost solitary; then she had heard a distant tumult, something like the threatenings of a storm; had gone on to the balcony; had heard it swelling louder and louder as it drew near; had seen the torrents of light pouring down Toledo Street, and, always fearful as she was in remembering the fate of her sister Antoinette, had taken it for the oncoming wave of a revolution. She was already talking of flight; Nelson was even offering her a refuge

on board his vessel, when she was informed that the King was being brought home in triumph by the people. As she knew nothing of Pronio's proclamation, this seemed quite impossible; but neither Emma, Nelson, Sir William, or Acton could explain this absence of moral sense in a whole people, and the absence of the philosophic sense in themselves prevented these illustrious persons from realizing what wretched little accidents, when a throne is shaken, sway its establishment or its fall. The Queen, finally reassured, hastened on to the balcony followed by all her friends except Acton, who, disdainful of popularity and detested as a foreigner, and no longer loved by the Queen, had ceased to court it. But, though the Castle Square was full of people, no one seemed to notice the Queen; every look, every cry, every heart beat was for the King *who had passed through the French lines to come and die with his people.* Then the Queen ordered the Duke of Calabria to be told of his father's approach, and she had all the Royal children brought, and took up a position behind them on the balcony. Even then the attention of the crowd was all for the Royal procession just then beginning to pass Santa Brigitta.

As to Ferdinand he was beginning to think with Cardinal Ruffo that ten thousand ducats was not a high price for such an entry, especially in comparison with the one his, by no means severe, Royal conscience had led him to anticipate.

The King alighted from his carriage; the people actually carrying him up the great staircase to his apartments.

The crowd was so great that he was parted from the Duke of Ascoli, of whom no one took any notice and who disappeared in this human wave. The King showed himself on the balcony, took the hand of Prince Francis, embraced his children amid the frenzied cries of a hundred thousand persons, and gathering into one group all the young princes and princesses, whom he encircled in his arms: "They also," cried he, "will die with you."

And all the people cried with one voice: "For you and for them, sire, we will perish to the last man."

The King took out his handkerchief and made as if to wipe away a tear.

The Queen, pale and shuddering, stepped back from the balcony, and sought Acton, within the room, standing, resting one hand on a table, looking on at this strange sight.

"We are lost," said she, "the King will stay."

"Be easy, madame," said Acton with a bow, "I will undertake, myself, to make him go."

The people stood about in the streets long after the King had disappeared, long after the windows were shut!

The King went to his apartments without even enquiring what had become of d'Ascoli, who had been carried home in a faint, bruised, trampled under foot, half dead. It is true that Ferdinand was in a hurry to see Jupiter again, whom he had not seen for more than six weeks.

Intelligent people, undeceived by the popular manifestations, saw behind that spontaneous enthusiasm the real bearing of events; the King in flight, his army defeated, and the French marching on Naples, and foresaw the inevitable consequences. One of the houses where the news produced the liveliest sensation on account of the different personal interests of the inhabitants was the House of the Palm Tree.

Luisa had kept her word to Salvato; since he had left that room into which he had been carried a dying man, to revive under her tender care, her every free moment had been passed in it. She neither wept nor lamented; she did not even need to speak of him. Once gone it seemed to her that she should no longer mention him but to God. No, the purity of her strong and controlled love left her melancholy and serene; she entered the room, tenderly surveyed everything there, sat down in her usual place at the head of the bed, and fell to dreaming.

These reveries in which she saw pass again, day by day, hour by hour and minute by minute, the two months which had just fled; these reveries were infinitely sweet. Formerly she had occupied her solitude with work or reading; now needle, pencil, music, were all neglected. In the presence of her friends, or of her husband, she lived with one foot in the past, one in the present. But when alone she lived in the past only.

The four days that had elapsed since Salvato's departure had assumed an immense place in her life; and in this life everything passed as in a dream. This melancholy, tempered by the hope of Salvato's return, was so gentle that her husband had not even remarked it. Her tender and deep affection for him in no way suffered for the love she bore to another; and the Chevalier San Felice remained as unconscious of it, as calm and happy as he had always been.

But each of them felt a separate uneasiness on learning of the King's return to Caserta.

San Felice had heard the news at the Royal palace; but being unaware that it would have an especial interest for Luisa, he had returned home at his usual time and had told her of it without special disquiet. But Luisa, who knew through Salvato that a battle was imminent, had astonished the Chevalier by pointing out the Neapolitans had probably encountered the French and had been beaten. This she did with great self-control, for, even supposing the French victorious, they must have had losses, and who could assure her that Salvato was neither wounded nor dead? At the first pretext that occurred to her she withdrew to her room and knelt in prayer long and piously before the crucifix on which San Felice had sworn to make her happy to the dying prince her father.

At five o'clock, the Chevalier roused by a great noise in the street, had gone out, had seen the proclamation being posted up, had read it, and had gone into the town to obtain further news. While he was absent, Cirillo had come, unaware of Salvato's departure, or of the King's return. On hearing of this from Luisa

he was very uneasy, but he went away promising to send her any news he received of Salvato at once. He had been gone a long time when San Felice brought back word of the King's triumph which he had witnessed. He shrugged his shoulders at the Neapolitan's enthusiasm; he was too sagacious not to have observed the obscure side of the proclamation, and he suspected some deception. At eleven o'clock he retired to rest; and Luisa went as usual to Salvato's room. But this fear was stirring her love to passion; she knelt down at the bedside, wept much, and several times set her lips to the pillow where the wounded man's head had rested. Next day she was pale and discomposed. Directly after breakfast San Felice was summoned to attend the Prince, and, as he was going out a letter was brought for Luisa, from Portici. It was in an unknown hand. She opened it mechanically, but on seeing the signature uttered a cry: the letter was from Salvato. She laid it to her heart, and ran to shut herself up in the sacred room.

"It is from him," she murmured; falling into the armchair at the head of the bed, "it is from him!" For a moment she was powerless to read; the blood which flew from her heart to her brain made her temples throb and dimmed her eyes.

Salvato wrote from the battlefield:

"Thank God, my beloved! I arrived in time for the struggle, and have known victory; your prayers have been heard; God has watched over me and my honour."

"Never has a victory been more complete, my beloved Luisa; on the field of battle itself my dear General pressed me to his heart, and made me chief of brigade. Mack's army has vanished like smoke! I am setting out immediately for Civita-Ducale, whence I shall find means to send you this letter. In the disorder which will result on our victory and the defeat of the Neapolitans, it is impossible to rely on the post. I love you, I love you!"

“ Civita Ducale, two o'clock
“ in the morning.

“ Here I am ten leagues nearer to you. Hector Caraffa and I have found a peasant who, thanks to my horse which I had left here, and for which please give all my compliments to Michael, consents to set out this very instant; he will stop only when the horse falls under him, and he will immediately take another; he undertakes to carry a letter to the friend of ours with whom Hector was hiding at Portici. Your letter will be enclosed in his; he will send it on to you.

“ I tell you this that you may not wonder how it comes; that preoccupation would separate you a moment from me. No, I want you to be all joy in reading me, as I am all happiness in writing to you.

“ Our victory is so complete that I don't think we have another battle to fight. We shall march straight upon Naples, and if nothing stops us, as is likely, I shall see you in eight or at most ten days.

“ Leave open the window by which I came away, I shall re-enter by that same window. I shall see you again in that same room where I was so happy, I shall bring you back there the life you there gave me.

“ I shall not miss any opportunity of writing to you; if however you do not get a letter from me do not be uneasy, the messengers will have been unfaithful, stopped or killed.

“ Oh Naples! my dear country! my second love after you! Naples, you are then about to be free!

“ I don't want to delay my courier, I don't want to delay your joy; I am twice happy in my love and in yours. Au revoir, my much adored Luisa! I love you! I love you!

“ SALVATO.”

Luisa had read the young man's letter ten times, perhaps, when, suddenly, Giovannina knocked at the door.

“ The Chevalier is returning,” said she.

Luisa uttered a cry, kissed the letter, placed it on her heart, and, on leaving the room, smiled at the window in the other room by which Salvato had left and was

to return. This love invested with life every inanimate object around her which had been near Salvato.

As she entered the drawing-room by one door, her husband came in by the other, visibly pre-occupied.

"What ails you, my friend?" asked Luisa, "you are sad and disturbed."

The Chevalier sat down, took both hands of Luisa, who remained standing, and looked earnestly at her. "I have seen the prince," said he, "the position of the royal family is quite as serious as we had forecast last evening; there is no hope of defending Naples against the French; and it is decided to withdraw to Sicily."

Without knowing why, Luisa felt her heart contract. The Chevalier saw in her face a reflection of what was passing within his breast. His lips trembled, his eyes half closed.

"So listen attentively, my child," said he, with that gently paternal tone he sometimes used to Luisa. "So, the Prince said to me: 'Chevalier, you are my only friend, you are the only man with whom I have real pleasure in conversing; the little solid education I have I owe to you; the little I am worth I have from you; one man only can help me to support exile, and it is you, Chevalier. I ask you, I beg you, if I am obliged to go, go with me.'"

Luisa felt a shudder run through her.

"And what did you answer, my friend?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"I pitied this royal misfortune, this weakness in greatness, this prince without a friend in exile, this heir to the crown without a servant, because, perhaps, he was going to lose the crown: I promised." Luisa started; the Chevalier was aware of it for he held her hands.

"But," he went on quickly, "understand this, Luisa. My promise is quite a personal one, binding on me alone; away from the court, where you have disclaimed your place, you have no obligation towards anyone. You are free, dear child of my heart, to stay in

Naples, not to leave this house that you love, this garden where you have run about and played as a child; this little nook, in short, where you have gathered up seventeen years of memories; where for seventeen years you have been the joy of my hearth! It seems as if you came yesterday."

The Chevalier sighed. Luisa said nothing; he went on:

"As soon as the Queen has gone, the Duchess Fusco, exiled by her, will return; with such a friend to watch over you I shall fear for you no more than if you were with a mother. In a fortnight the French will be in Naples; but you need not dread the French. I know them, having long dwelt among them. They bring to my country benefits I could have wished bestowed by its rulers: liberty, intelligence. All my friends, and consequently all yours are patriots; no revolution can disquiet them, no persecution can reach them.

"So, my friend," demanded Luisa, "you believe that I can live in happiness without you?"

"A husband such as I, dear child," said San Felice with a sigh, "is not a husband for a woman of your age to regret."

"But admit that I can live without you, can you, my friend, live without me?"

San Felice looked down.

"You fear I shall miss my little nook," continued Luisa, "but will not you miss my presence? Will not our common life for seventeen years as it sunders tear something from you, not only customary, but indispensable?"

San Felice remained mute.

"When you do not wish to abandon the prince who is only your friend," added Luisa in a stifled voice, "are you giving me a proof of regard in proposing to abandon me, you, my father and my friend, who have put intelligence into my mind, goodness in my heart, God in my soul?"

San Felice sighed.

“When you promised the Prince to follow him, in short, did you think that I should not follow you?”

A tear fell from the Chevalier's eyes on to Luisa's hand.

“If you thought that, my friend,” she went on with a gentle, sad head shake, “you were wrong; my dying father united us, God has blessed our union, death only will disunite us. I will follow you, my friend.”

San Felice quickly raised his face, beaming with happiness, and in its turn a tear of Luisa's fell on her husband's hand.

“But you love me, then? Blessing of the good God! You love me, then?” cried the Chevalier.

“My father,” said Luisa, “you have been ungrateful, beg your daughter's pardon.”

San Felice knelt down, kissing his daughter's hands; while she murmured:

“If I did not do what I am doing, should I not be unworthy of both?”

CHAPTER XIX

FURTHER FRUITS OF THE KING'S DUCATS

PRINCE FRANCIS in speaking to San Felice of the flight of the royal family into Sicily as decided upon, was correct as regards the Queen, who desired flight at any price; but on witnessing the devotion of his people the King had again the idea of defending his capital and of appealing from the cowardice of the army to the energy of this people which was offering itself so spontaneously to him.

He was rising, then, on the morning of the 11th December, the day following that incredible triumph in which we have tried to make our readers participate, without a fixed plan as yet, but leaning rather towards resistance than flight, when he was informed that Admiral Francis Caracciolo had been in the ante-chamber for half-an-hour waiting till His Majesty rose.

Influenced by the Queen's prejudices, Ferdinand did not like the admiral, but could not help esteeming him: his splendid courage in the different encounters he had had with Barbary pirates, the skill with which he had drawn his frigate, the *Minerva*, from the roads of Toulon, when Toulon had been retaken from the English by Bonaparte, the coolness he had displayed in the protection he gave to the other vessels which he had brought back damaged by shot and tempest, without losing one—all this had secured for him the rank of admiral.

Ferdinand thought that Caracciolo had come to beg

for his nephew Nicolino's pardon, and delighted to have a hold on the admiral through the false position in which a member of his family was placed, and feeling a malevolent disposition to be disagreeable to him, he gave orders for his immediate admittance.

The Admiral, in full dress, came in calm and dignified as usual, their high social position for four hundred years had put the heads of his family in contact with the sovereigns of all the races, Angevin, Aragon, Spanish, which had succeeded to the throne of Naples; he joined, therefore, to a supreme dignity, a perfect courtesy, always slightly embarrassing to Ferdinand, in whom courtesy was not a strong point. So, when he saw the Admiral stop respectfully at a little distance, and, according to Court etiquette, wait for the King to address him first, he hastened to begin the conversation with the reproach on his lips.

"Ah, there you are, Admiral," said he, "it seems that you have made a great point of seeing me?"

"True, sire," replied Caracciolo, bowing; "I thought it of the first importance to have the honour of seeing Your Majesty personally."

"Oh, I know what brings you," said the King. "You come to speak for that bad lot, your nephew Nicolino, don't you? It appears he is mixed up in a bad business, nothing less than the crime of high treason; but I warn you that all prayers, even yours, will be useless, and that justice will take its course."

A smile flitted across the Admiral's austere countenance.

"Your Majesty errs," said he; "amid great political catastrophes, little family happenings are lost sight of. I do not know, and do not desire to know, what my nephew has done; if he is innocent, his innocence will appear in his trial; if guilty, justice will be done. Nicolino is of high birth; he will have the right of being beheaded, and, Your Majesty knows, the sword is such a noble weapon that, even in the hands of the executioner, it does not dishonour those who are struck by it."

"But then," said the King, a little surprised at such calm and simple dignity, of which his nature, temperament and character, gave him no instinctive notion, "but then what have you come to speak to me about?"

"Of you, sire, and of the kingdom."

"Ah, ah," said the King, "you come to give me some advice."

"If Your Majesty deigns to consult me," replied Caracciolo, "I shall be happy and proud to place my humble experience at your disposal. In the contrary case I shall content myself with offering my life and those of my brave sailors."

The King would have liked a pretext to take umbrage, but could find nothing. "Hum!" said he, "hum!" and after two or three seconds silence:

"Very well, Admiral," he said, "I will consult you."

And, in fact, he was already turning to Caracciolo, when a footman approached him and said a few words in a low tone.

The King turned again to Caracciolo, "Can what you have to say to me be said before a witness, sir?" he enquired.

"Before the whole world, sire."

"Then, introduce him," said Ferdinand to the footman, and to Caracciolo, "It is a friend, more than a friend, an ally; it is the illustrious Admiral Nelson." And at that moment the footman announced:

"Lord Nelson of the Nile, Baron of Burnham-Thorpe, Duke of Brontë!"

A slight smile, not untinged with bitterness, just showed itself on Caracciolo's lips at the enumeration of all these titles.

Nelson entered and fixing his grey eye on the man who had preceded him, recognised Admiral Caracciolo.

"You are acquainted with one another, gentlemen, I believe," said the King.

"Since Toulon, yes, sire," said Nelson.

"And I since 1786, for twelve illustrious years," said Caracciolo, courteously referring to an exploit of Nelson's off Canada.

"Milord," said the King, "here is Admiral Caracciolo come to offer his advice on the situation. Sit down and hear what he has to say, when he has finished you can reply if you desire; only, I tell you beforehand, I should be happy if two such eminent men, so well acquainted with the art of war, were of the same opinion. Now, Caracciolo."

"It was rumoured in the town yesterday, wrongly, I hope," began the Admiral, "that Your Majesty, despairing of defending your kingdom on land, had decided to withdraw to Sicily."

"And you would be of a contrary opinion, it seems?"

"Sire," replied Caracciolo, "I am and always shall be for a counsel of honour against a counsel of shame. It is for the honour of the kingdom, sire, and consequently for the honour of your name that your capital be defended to the last extremity."

"Do you know in what state our affairs are?" said the King.

"Yes, sire; bad, but not lost. The army is scattered, but not destroyed. You still have about forty thousand men, an army four times larger than that of the French, and fighting on its own soil, with the support of the population."

"And you would undertake to rally the army?"

"Yes, sire."

"Do me the pleasure of explaining in what way."

"I have four thousand sailors under my command, tried men; give me the order, sire, and I put myself instantly at their head; a thousand will defend the road from Itri to Sessa, a thousand that from Lora to San Germano, a thousand that from Castel-di-Sangro to Isernia; the remaining thousand will fortify these three passages and serve the artillery; with these, were it only with their boarding pikes, I bear the shock of the French, however terrible, and when your soldiers see how sailors die, sire, they will rally behind them; above all if Your Majesty is there as their standard."

"And who will guard Naples, meanwhile?"

"The Prince Royal, sire, and the eight thousand men under General Naselli, whom Milord Nelson conveyed to Tuscany, where they have nothing further to do. Milord Nelson left a part of his fleet at Leghorn, I believe; let him send a small vessel with Your Majesty's command to bring back these eight thousand fresh troops to Naples, and, with God's help, they will be here in a week. Thus, you see, sire, what a force remains to you; forty-five to fifty thousand troops, the population of thirty towns and fifty villages which will rise, and behind them Naples with its five hundred thousand souls. What will become of ten thousand French in that ocean?"

"Hum!" said the King looking at Nelson, who remained silent.

"There will be always time, sire, for you to embark," continued Caracciolo. "Be convinced of that: the French have no armed vessel, and you have three fleets in port: your own, the Portuguese and His Britannic Majesty's."

"What do you say to the Admiral's plan, milord?" said the King, this time putting Nelson under the necessity of answering.

"I say, sire," replied Nelson, remaining seated and continuing to trace hieroglyphics with the pen in his left hand on a piece of paper, "I say that there is nothing worse in the world than to change a decision once it is taken."

"Has the King already decided?" asked Caracciolo.

"No, you see, not yet; I am hesitating, I waver . . ."

"The Queen," said Nelson, "is resolved on departure."

"The Queen?" said Caracciolo, not leaving the King time to reply. "Very well, let her go. Women, in these circumstances, may leave danger behind; but men should face it."

"You see, Caracciolo, Milord Nelson is for departure."

"Pardon, sire," said Caracciolo, "but as yet Milord Nelson has given no opinion."

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"Give it, milord," said the King, "I ask for it."

"My opinion, sire, is the same as the Queen's, namely, that I shall rejoice to see Your Majesty seek in Sicily a safe refuge that Naples no longer offers you."

"I entreat Milord Nelson not to give his advice lightly," said Caracciolo, addressing himself to his colleague; for he knew the weight of the opinion of such a man.

"I have given it and I do not retract it," Nelson harshly replied.

"Sire," returned Caracciolo, "remember that Milord Nelson is English."

"What does that mean, sir?" proudly demanded Nelson.

"That if you were a Neapolitan you would say otherwise."

"And why, pray?"

"Because you would consult your country's honour in place of Great Britain's interest."

"And what interest has Great Britain in my advice to the King, sir?"

"By enhancing the danger, to demand a greater recompense. It is known that England desires Malta, milord."

"England has Malta, sir; the King has given it to her."

"Oh, sire," said Caracciolo in a reproachful tone, "I was told so but did not wish to credit it."

"And what the devil do you want me to do with Malta?" said the King. "A rock good for cooking eggs in the sun!"

"Sire," said Caracciolo, without further addressing Nelson, "I entreat you in the name of all the hearts truly Neapolitan in the kingdom, to listen no longer to foreign advice which puts your throne within an inch of the abyss. M. Acton is a foreigner, Sir William Hamilton is a foreigner, Milord Nelson himself is a foreigner; how do you suppose that they can rightly appreciate Neapolitan honour?"

"True, sir; but they rightly appreciate Neapolitan cowardice," returned Nelson, "and that's why I said to the King after what happened at Civita Castellana: 'Sire, you can no longer confide yourself to men who have deserted you, either from fear, or from treason.'"

Caracciolo grew terribly pale and, in spite of himself, put his hand to his sword hilt; but, controlling himself, he said: "Every nation has its hour of weakness," and turning to the King: "Sire, it is the duty of a King who loves his people to give them the chance of repairing its failure; let the King say but one word and not a Frenchman will emerge from the Abruzzi, if they are imprudent enough to venture therein."

"My dear Caracciolo," the King said, turning to the Admiral whose advice flattered his secret desire; "your opinion is that of a man whose counsel I greatly appreciate—Cardinal Ruffo."

"Well, sire," cried Caracciolo quickly, clinging to the hope thus given, "it is the good genius of Naples inspiring you; follow the Cardinal's advice, and I, can I say more? will be at his command."

"Sire," said Nelson, rising and bowing to the King, "I hope that Your Majesty will not forget that if Italian admirals obey the orders of a priest, an English admiral obeys only the orders of his government." And casting on Caracciolo a look, in which could be read the threat of an eternal hatred, Nelson went out by the same door by which he had entered and which communicated with the Queen's apartments. The King followed Nelson with his eyes and when the door had closed behind him: "Oh well," said he, "there is gratitude for my twenty thousand ducats annuity, my duchy of Brontë, my sword of Philip V. and my ribbon of St. Ferdinand." Then, turning to Caracciolo: "You are right, my poor Francis," said he, "the foreigners are the evil! M. Acton, Sir William, M. Mack, Lord Nelson, the Queen herself, Irish, Germans, English, Austrian dogs everywhere; Neapolitans nowhere. What a bulldog this Nelson is! It doesn't

matter, you set him down very well! If ever we go to war with England and he gets you into his hands, your account is”

“Sire,” said Caracciolo laughing, “I am happy at any such risk to have deserved your approval. Will you permit me to insist further?”

“You have no need, since I agree with you. I shall see Ruffo to-day, and we shall speak again of all this; but, since we are alone together, why on earth did you make an enemy of the Queen? You know that when she hates, she does not do it by halves!”

Caracciolo looked away, then returning to his incessant pre-occupation, “So I may take with me the hope that Your Majesty has given up this shameful flight and that Naples will be defended to the last?”

“Take more than a hope; a certainty. There is a council to-day, I am going to signify that I have resolved to stay in Naples. I have well in mind what you have said as to our means of defence; be easy.”

“Sire; one last favour? If against all expectation Your Majesty does go”

“But I tell you that I shall not.”

“Sire, if by any hap whatever, if by an unexpected reaction, Your Majesty went, I hope you would not cast the disgrace on the Neapolitan Navy of going on an English vessel.”

“Oh, as to that, you may be easy. I don't speak for the Queen, the Queen will do as she likes, but if reduced to such an extremity I give you my word of honour to go on your vessel, the *Minerva*. So, you are warned, change your cook if he is no good, and lay in some macaroni and parmesan if you have not enough on board. *Au revoir*”

Caracciolo, enraptured with the result of his interview, withdrew, relying on the King's double promise.

The King looked after him with marked good will. “And to think,” said he, “that one is stupid enough to embroil one's self with such men for a regular Tartar like the Queen, and for a bad lot like Lady Hamilton!”

The King kept the promise he had made to Caracciolo; he declared loudly and resolutely to the Council that, after the popular manifestation he had witnessed the preceding evening, he had decided to remain in Naples and to defend to the last extremity the entry of the kingdom from the French. In face of such a plainly formulated announcement, no opposition was possible; it could only have proceeded from the Queen, and, reassured by Acton's positive promise that he would find a way to make the King set out for Sicily, she had given up the idea of an open struggle which would have increased his obstinacy as usual.

On leaving the Council the King found Cardinal Ruffo waiting for him; he had done as agreed with the King with his usual exactitude. Ferrari had come to him during the night, and half-an-hour later had set out for Vienna through Manfredonia, taking the forged letter which was to be shown to the Emperor, with whom Ferdinand was most anxious not to quarrel, he being his sole support against France through the influence he had in Italy, just as in the contrary case, France alone could support him against Austria. An explanatory note signed by Ruffo in the King's name accompanied the forgery.

The King having related what passed between himself, Caracciolo and Nelson; Ruffo had strongly approved the King's action, and had insisted on a conference between him and Caracciolo in the King's presence. It was agreed to wait for news of the effect produced by Pronio's manifesto in the Abruzzi, and on the result, to decide upon the course to follow.

On the same day, the King received the young Corsican, di Cesare, whom the ushers mistook for the Prince Royal on account of his striking resemblance to him. The young captain in his new uniform, and bringing the commission made out by Acton, was proud and joyful; he came to place his own and his comrades' devotion at the King's feet; proof of which was only delayed by their engagement to escort the aged

princesses to Manfredonia, whence they were to take ship for Trieste.

The news expected from Pronio was not long in coming, and surpassed every expectation. Priests, nobles and magistrates were echoing the King's words; the cry, "To Arms," was resounding everywhere. Fra Diavolo and Mammone had accepted their mission with enthusiasm; armed with their commissions and with the King's name on their lips, their power was limitless, since the law protected instead of suppressing them. From the moment that they could give their brigandage a political colour they promised to raise the whole countryside. Brigandage, in fact, in the mountains of southern Italy is an indigenous product; like figs in the valleys or grapes on the hills. It is a profession like any other, and no disgrace attaches to it. It is followed during nine months of the year, and in the winter the brigand returns to his village and dwells there amicably with his kind. The laws against him do not vary, nor do his misdemeanours, and he is always a reactionist, and for the throne and altar if they will accept his services in times of revolution; whilst he is disowned by liberals and progressists. It is, therefore, most difficult to extirpate brigandage, supported as it often is by the authorities; who are actually often themselves involved in it. As for priests and monks they are the very soul of it; they distribute medals which have been blessed to the insurgents, who, if they are killed in spite of them, die heroically, looking upon them as passports to heaven.

There is an enormous difference between **INDEPENDENCE AND LIBERTY**. The brigand is independent and individually courageous. The soldier is free and collectively courageous. In 1798, the Neapolitans had not progressed further than their independent state; they had acquired neither liberty nor fraternity; that is why they were defeated in battle by an army five times less numerous.

But the peasants in the Neapolitan provinces had always been independent. So when the monks spoke

in the name of God, the King in the name of the family, and hatred in the name of covetousness, robbery and murder, the whole people rose. Each man took his rifle, axe or knife and set out to destroy and plunder. Masses of troops had fled before the French; single men marched against them; an army had dissolved away, a people sprang from the earth.

It was time. The news of the army continued to be disastrous. One part of it, under Moesk, had taken up a fortified position at Calvi, and surrendered at discretion to General Maurice Mathieu. Macdonald's rapid blows had saved some but not all of Mack's prisoners. At Ascoli, three hundred republicans had been tied to trees and shot. At Abricalli, thirty sick or wounded, some of whom had suffered amputation, had had their throats cut in the ambulance. The others, lying on straw, had been pitilessly burnt. But loyal to his proclamation, Championnet had responded to all these barbarities with humane actions.

General de Damas, who, as an emigrant Frenchman, had offered his sword to Ferdinand, alone sustained the honour of the Neapolitan flag after the defeat of Civita Castellana. He and his column of seven thousand, forgotten by Mack, asked permission of Championnet to cross Rome and join the débris of the Royalist army on the Teverone. Championnet instructed one of his promising young officers, Bonami, to investigate and report. At the Salarian gate, Bonami met General Rey and his cavalry entering Rome, and suggested to him to make a reconnaissance on the road to Albano and Frascati; while he himself hastened as fast as he could across the Ponte Molle in search of General de Damas, followed at a distance by Rey's detachment and Macdonald's light cavalry. He made such haste that he left them far behind, and to give them time to come up, presented himself with a flag of truce.

He was brought before General de Damas.

"You wrote to the Commander-in-Chief of the

French army, General," said he; "he sends me to ask you to explain what you require."

"I want a passage for my division."

"And if he refuses it?"

"I have but one resource: to carve it, sword in hand."

Bonami smiled.

"You must understand, General, that such benevolence is impossible to you and your seven thousand men. If you try to force a passage you will have your work cut out. I therefore suggest to you to lay down your arms."

It was General de Damas's turn to smile.

"Chief of the Staff," replied he, "when each of one's seven thousand has eighty cartridges, one does not surrender; one passes or dies."

"Well, so be it! Let us fight, General," said Bonami.

The emigrant general appeared to consider.

"Give me six hours," said he, "to assemble a council of war and decide."

This did not suit Bonami. "You don't need six hours," he answered, "I will give you one. It was just the time he needed for his infantry to come up. So it was agreed. Bonami galloped off and rejoined Rey to hasten him on. But General de Damas had profited by the hour; and when Bonami returned with his troop, he discovered him retreating in good order towards Orbitello.

Rey and Bonami immediately started in pursuit; came up with them at Storta and charged energetically. The rearguard turned and faced them. For the first time Rey and Bonami met serious resistance, but they wore it down with repeated charges. Night fell. The devotion and courage of the rearguard had saved the army. General de Damas took advantage of the darkness and his knowledge of the locality to continue his retreat. The French were too tired to follow him.

But General de Damas had not done with the Repub-

licans. Macdonald sent word to Kellerman at Borghetta; who, assembling his troops, came across de Damas's column at Toscanelli, which, holding firm under French generalship, vigorously resisted; de Damas himself fighting with splendid courage in the rearguard.

However, one of Kellerman's well-known charges, and an injury to the emigrant general, decided the day in favour of the French. The largest part of the Neapolitan column had already reached Orbitello and had had time to embark. Pushed speedily into the town, Damas had time to shut the gates behind him, and whether out of consideration for his courage, or because the French general did not want to waste time in an assault on such a wretched little hole, Kellerman allowed Damas, provided he abandoned his artillery, to embark with his vanguard without interference.

The result was that the only general of the Neapolitan army, who had done his duty in this short and shameful campaign, was a French general.

Conqueror at all points, and thinking that nothing could hinder his march upon Naples, Championnet gave the order to cross the Neapolitan frontier in three columns.

The left wing, under Macdonald, invaded the Abruzzi by Aquila. The right wing, under General Rey, invaded the Campagna by the Pontine Marshes, Terracina and Fondi. The centre, under Championnet himself, invaded the Terra di Lavoro by Valmontone, Ferentina, Ceperano.

Three fortresses, all almost impregnable, defended the marches of the kingdom: Gaeta, Civita-del-Tronto, Pescara.

Gaeta, commanding the route by the Tyrrhenian Sea, was defended by an old Swiss general named Tchudy; he had at his command four thousand men, seventy

guns, twelve mortars, twenty thousand rifles, provisions for a year and vessels in the port. General Rey summoned him to surrender.

Tchudy had just married a young wife. He was afraid for her, perhaps, who knows? As for himself, instead of holding out, he called a council, consulted the bishop, and assembled the magistrates, who seized upon the pretext to spare Gaeta the miseries of a siege. However, they were still hesitating when the French general threw a shell into the town; and this hostile demonstration was sufficient to cause Tchudy to send a deputation to the besiegers to ask their terms. "A surrender at discretion or all the rigours of war," General Rey replied.

The place surrendered two hours afterwards.

Duhesme, who, with fifteen hundred men, was marching along the Adriatic coast, sent an envoy to Pricard, commanding Pescara, to summon him to surrender. Pricard, as if he intended burying himself in the ruins of the town, made the French officer inspect the defences in every detail, showing him fortifications, arms, munitions and provisions, and finally sent him back with these lofty words:

"A fortress thus supplied does not surrender."

Which did not prevent him, at the first gunshot, from opening his gates and giving up this town, so well fortified, to General Duhesme. It contained sixty guns, four mortars and nineteen hundred soldiers.

As to Civitella-del-Tronto, a place already strong in its position, and stronger still artificially, it was defended by a Spaniard named Jean Lacombe, and had ten heavy guns, and plenty of munitions and supplies. It could have held out for a year; it did so for a day and surrendered after two hours' siege.

Thus it was time that leaders of bands should replace generals, and brigands take the place of soldiers.

Three bands under Pronio's direction were organised with lightning rapidity; one which he commanded himself, Gaetano Mammone's and Fra Diavolo's.

It was Pronio who first encountered the French columns.

After having taken Pescara, leaving there a garrison of four hundred men, Duhesme took the road to Chieti to effect a junction with Championnet before Capua as he had been ordered. On reaching Tocco he heard brisk firing from near Sulmona and hastened on his men.

The fact was that a French column, under General Rusca, after having entered the town of Sulmona unresisted, with drums beating, had suddenly met with a hail of shot raining upon it from every window. Surprised at this unexpected attack it had hesitated.

Pronio, profiting by being ambushed in the church of San Panfilo, had emerged with a hundred men, and had charged the French, while the firing from the windows redoubled. In spite of Rusca's efforts, his men broke ranks, and he had retired precipitately from Sulmona, leaving about a dozen dead and wounded in the streets. But when they saw Pronio's soldiers mutilating the corpses, and the inhabitants despatching the wounded, crimson with shame the Republicans formed up again of their own accord, and with cries of vengeance again entered Sulmona, returning both the fire from the windows and the street. However, hidden in doorways, ambushed in bye-lanes, Pronio and his men kept up a terrible fire, and it is possible that the French might have had to retreat for the second time when a sharp fusilade was heard at the other end of the town. Duhesme and his men, hastening to the scene of action, had made a circling movement and were falling on Pronio from behind. Pronio, a pistol in each hand, ran to his rearguard, rallied it, found himself confronting Duhesme, fired at him and hit him in the arm. A republican sprang forward at Pronio with lifted sword; but with a second shot Pronio killed him, picked up a rifle, and, heading his men, sounded a retreat, meanwhile giving an order in patois that the French could not understand. The order was to retreat fighting, and

escape by all the little lanes and regain the mountains. In a moment the town was evacuated. Those who were indoors fled through the gardens. The French were masters of Sulmona; but this time the brigands had fought one against ten. They had been beaten; but they had caused cruel losses to the republicans. This encounter was, therefore, looked upon in Naples as a triumph.

For his part, Fra Diavolo with about a hundred men, after the capture of Gaeta, so shamefully surrendered, had valiantly defended the bridge of Garigliana, attacked by the aide-de-camp, Gourdel, and fifty republicans whom General Rey, not suspecting the organisation of the bands, had sent to seize it. The French had been repulsed, and Gourdel, several officers and men lying wounded on the field had been picked up half dead, tied to trees and burned over a slow fire, amidst the hooting of the people of Mignano, Sessa, and Traetta, and the furious dances of the women, always more ferocious than the men at these kinds of festivals.

At first Fra Diavolo had wanted to oppose these murders and prolonged agonies. From a feeling of pity he had discharged his pistols and carbine at the wounded. But, from the frowns of the men and the insults of the women, he had seen that he was risking his popularity by such acts of pity. He withdrew from the stakes where the republicans were undergoing their martyrdom, and wished to send Francesca away; but Francesca did not want to lose any part of the sight. She escaped from his hands and danced and shouted with more frenzy than the other women.

As to Mammone, he stayed at Capistrella, before Sora, between Lake Fucina and the Liri. He was told that an officer in French uniform, escorted by a guide, could be seen in the distance descending the source of the Liri.

“Bring them both to me,” said Mammone.

Five minutes later they were before him. Instead of leading the officer to General Lemoine to whom he was

charged to transmit an order from General Championnet, the guide had treacherously brought him to Gaetano Mammone. He was an aide-de-camp of the Commander-in-Chief, named Claie.

"You arrive opportunely," said Mammone to him. "I am thirsty." One knows with what kind of liquid Mammone used to quench his thirst.

He had the aide-de-camp stripped of his coat, waist-coat, cravat and shirt, and ordered that his hands should be bound and that he should be tied to a tree. Then he put his finger on the carotid artery to make sure of its position, and feeling it throb, plunged in his dagger. The aide-de-camp had neither spoken, pleaded nor uttered a groan; he knew into the hands of what cannibal he had fallen, and, like the gladiator of old, had thought of one thing only, to die well. Mortally wounded, he uttered no cry, and let no sigh escape. The blood spurted from the wound in jets, as it bursts from an artery.

Mammone set his lips to the aide-de-camp's neck, and gorged himself voluptuously.

After this, as his spies informed him that a small party of republicans, numbering twenty or thirty, was advancing by the Tagliacozza road, he ordered that arms should be concealed, flowers and olive branches plucked; that women should take the former, boys and men the latter, and that they should go to meet the detachment, and invite the officer in command to come with his men and take part in a feast that the village of Capistrello, composed of patriots, was giving as a sign of rejoicing at their happy advent.

The messengers set out singing. Every house in the village opened its doors; a large table was set up on the square in front of the mayor's office; and wine, bread, meat, hams and cheese were brought out. Another table was arranged for the officers in the mayor's parlour, the windows of which looked out on the square.

At a league's distance from the town, the messengers met the little detachment commanded by Captain

Tremeau.* A guide, interpreter, and a traitor as usual, who was leading the detachment, explained to the republican captain what these men, children and women, coming with flowers and olive branches to meet him, wanted. Full of courage and loyalty, the captain had not even an idea of treason. He kissed the pretty girls who were offering their flowers, he ordered the sutler to empty her barrel of brandy; all drank to the health of General Championnet, to the spread of the French republic, and made their way arm in arm towards the village singing the *Marseillaise*.

Gaetano Mammone, with all the rest of the inhabitants, was awaiting the French detachment at the gate into the village; it was welcomed by an immense ovation. Everyone fraternised once more, and amid cries of joy, proceeded to the mayor's.

There, as we have said, a table was set up; a plate was put for each soldier. The few officers dined, or rather were to have dined, with the magistrate, deputies and municipal body represented by Gaetano Mammone and the chief brigands enrolled under his orders. The soldiers, delighted with their reception, stacked their rifles at ten paces from the table prepared for them; the women took away their swords with which the children amused themselves playing at soldiers; then they sat down, bottles were uncorked and glasses filled.

Captain Tremeau, a lieutenant and two sergeants, at the same time sat down in the lower hall.

Mammone's men glided between the table and the rifles that the captain had had loaded for greater precaution, on setting out; the officers were separated at the table within in such a way as to have three or four brigands between each of them.

The signal for the massacre was to be given by

* * In the historical part it will be found satisfactory that we give the real names, as we have done for Colonel Gourdel, the aide-de-camp Claié, and as we now do for Captain Tremeau. These names are a proof that we do not invent anything, and do not make people shudder idly.—NOTE OF THE AUTHOR.

Mammone; he would raise Claie's skull full of wine at one of the windows and drink to the health of King Ferdinand. Everything happened as arranged. Mammone went to the window unobserved, filled with wine the still bleeding skull of the unhappy officer, took it by the hair as one lifts a goblet by its stem, and, appearing at the middle window, raised it to the toast agreed upon.

The whole population immediately responded with the cry: "Death to the French!"

The brigands threw themselves upon the stacked rifles; those who, pretending to serve them had surrounded the French, stepped back; firing burst out point blank, and the republicans fell under shots from their own weapons. Those who had escaped or who were only wounded had their throats cut by the women and children who had seized their swords.

As to the officers inside the hall, wishing to rush to the aid of their men, they were each held in their places by five or six men.

Mammone, triumphant, approached them, his bleeding cup in his hand, and offered them their lives if they would drink to the health of King Ferdinand in their compatriot's skull.

All four refused in horror.

Then he had a hammer and nails brought, made the officers spread their hands on the table and nailed them to it. Then fagots and bundles of straw were thrown into the room, and, when they had been set alight, the doors and windows were shut.

However, the torture of the republicans was shorter and less cruel than their tormentor had hoped. One of the sergeants was courageous enough to tear his hands free of the nails, and with Captain Tremeau's sword he performed for his companions the terrible service of stabbing them, and he stabbed himself afterwards.

The four heroes died crying: "Long live the Republic!"

The news reached Naples where it rejoiced King Ferdinand, who, seeing himself so well seconded by

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his faithful subjects, resolved more firmly than ever not to leave Naples.

Let us leave Mammone, Fra Diavolo and the Abbé Pronio to pursue their exploits, and let us see what was happening to the Queen, who, more firmly than ever, on the contrary, had resolved to quit the capital.

CHAPTER XX

THE UNDERGROUND PASSAGE

CARACCIOLO had spoken truly. It suited the English policy that, driven from their capital on *terra firma*, Ferdinand and Caroline should take refuge in Sicily, where they had nothing further to expect from their troops or their subjects, but only from English ships and sailors.

That is why Nelson, Sir William and Lady Hamilton urged the Queen to flight, which, besides, her personal fears energetically counselled. The Queen knew herself to be indeed so hated that in the event of a republican outburst she was certain, that just as her husband would be defended by the people, so on the contrary the people would abandon her to a prison or even to death!

The spectre of her sister Antoinette, her head, with hair turned white in one night, bowed in her hands, was day and night before her.

Now, ten days after the King's return, that is, on the 18th December, the Queen, Acton and Emma Hamilton were snugly together in the Queen's bedchamber.

It was eight o'clock in the evening. A terrible wind was beating with its wild wing against the windows of the royal palace, and the roar of the sea was heard breaking against the Spanish towers of the Castello Novo. A single lamp lit the room, and shed its light on a plan of the palace upon which the Queen and Acton appeared to be eagerly seeking some detail which escaped them.

In a corner of the room one could make out, in the

shadows, a motionless and dumb silhouette, which, with the impassiveness of a statue, seemed to be awaiting an order in readiness to carry it out.

The Queen made an impatient movement.

"Yet this secret passage exists," said she. "I am sure of it, although for a long time it has been out of use."

"And Your Majesty thinks this secret passage necessary to you?"

"Indispensable!" said the Queen. "Tradition assures one that it opens on to the military port, and by this passage only, without being seen, we can transport on board the English vessels our jewels, our gold, and the precious objects of art we wish to take away with us. If the people suspect our departure, and if they see us remove a single trunk on board the Vanguard, they will be suspicious; that will cause a disturbance, and there will be no further chance of going. It is absolutely necessary therefore for us to find this passage."

And the Queen, with the help of a magnifying glass, again began to look for the pencil marks which would indicate the underground passage in which she put all her hope.

Acton, seeing the Queen's pre-occupation, looked up, sought for the shade in the room which we have indicated, and having found it: "Dick!" said he. The young man started, as if he had not expected to be called, and especially as if his thought, sovereign mistress of his body, had transported him a thousand leagues from the spot where he stood. "Come here, Dick," said Acton. "You are something of an architect, I believe?"

"I studied architecture for two years," said this intelligent and passive servant, approaching.

"Well then, look, seek; perhaps you will discover what we cannot find. There should be in the cellars an underground passage, a secret tunnel leading from the palace interior to the military port."

Acton left the table and gave up his place to his secre-

tary, who leaned over the plan; then, rising immediately:

"I think it's no good looking for it," he said.

"Why?"

"If the architect of the palace has made a secret passage in the foundations, he will have taken care not to show it on the plan."

"Why so?" asked the Queen with her usual impatience.

"Because, madame, from the moment the passage is shown on the plan it is no longer a secret passage, since it will be known to everyone who looks at it."

The Queen laughed. "What your secretary says is logical enough, you know, General?"

"So logical that I am ashamed not to have thought of it," answered Acton.

"Well, now, Mr. Dick," said Emma Hamilton, "help us to find this underground way. Once found, I feel quite disposed to explore it like a heroine of Anne Radcliffe's, and to come and give the Queen an account of my exploration."

Before replying, Richard looked at General Acton as if to ask permission. "I believe," said he, "that the first thing to do is to explore all that part of the palace foundations that looks on to the wet dock. However well concealed the door may be, it is impossible that no trace should be found."

"Then we must wait till to-morrow," said the Queen, "and that is a night lost."

Dick went to the window. "But why, madame?" said he. "The sky is cloudy, but there is a full moon. Each time it comes from behind a cloud it will give me sufficient light for my search. I should only need the watchword so that I could move freely about within the port."

"Nothing simpler," said Acton. "We will go together to the governor of the castle; not only will he give you the watchword, but he will tell the sentries not to bother about you, but to let you do in peace all you require."

"Then, General, as Her Majesty said, let us lose no time."

"Go, General, go," said the Queen. "And you, sir, try to do honour to our good opinion of you."

"I shall do my best, madame," said the young man, and having bowed respectfully, he went out behind the Captain-General.

At the end of ten minutes Acton returned alone.

"Well?" asked the Queen.

"Well," returned he, "our hound is on the track, and I shall be much surprised if he comes back, as His Majesty says, after having made a hollow draw."

Indeed, furnished with the watchword, Dick had begun his search, and in an angle of the wall had discovered a grille with crossbars, covered with rust and spiders' webs, before which, without taking any notice of it, everyone passed with the carelessness of habit. Convinced that he had found one of the ends of the secret passage, Dick now occupied himself only with finding the other.

He re-entered the castle, enquired who was the oldest servant among all the domestics swarming in the lower floors, and heard that it was the father of the butler, who, after having had that office for forty years, had relinquished it to his son for twenty years past.

Dick had himself taken to the butler. He found the whole family of twelve persons at table. The grandfather, who had come with Charles III. as butler from Spain, was a handsome old man, upright, still vigorous, and seeming to have lost none of his intelligence.

Dick addressed him in Spanish. "The Queen asks for you," said he.

The old man started; no one had spoken to him in his own tongue for forty years. All the guests rose from their seats as if moved by a spring.

"The Queen asks for you," Dick repeated.

"Is Your Excellency quite sure?"

"Sure."

"And when?"

"Immediately."

"But I cannot appear like this before Her Majesty."

"She asks for you just as you are; she is waiting."

The old man got up, more perturbed than flattered by the invitation, and looked at his son with some uneasiness.

"Tell your son the locksmith not to go to bed," continued Dick in Spanish, "the Queen will probably need him to-night."

The old man transmitted the order to his son in Neapolitan. "I am at Your Excellency's service," said he, and with a step almost as firm, though weightier than that of his guide, he went up the servants' staircase with Dick and through the corridors. Dick signed to the ushers not to rise, and knocked gently at the Queen's door.

"Come in," said Caroline's imperious voice. "Well?" she continued, as he entered, leaving the old man in the ante-room, "what have you discovered?"

"What Your Majesty seeks—at least, I hope so. One of the doors of the secret passage, and I hope to bring to Your Majesty the man who will find the other."

"The man who will find the other?"

"The former butler of King Charles III., an old man of eighty-two."

"Have you questioned him?"

"I did not think myself authorised, madame, and I have left this task for you."

The old man was then called in.

"Ah! Ah! It is you, Pachecho," said the Queen, who recognised him as having waited upon her for fifteen or twenty years. "I was not aware that you were still among us. I am glad to see you alive and well. You can, precisely, because of your great age, do me a service."

"I am at Your Majesty's disposal."

"You ought, in the time of the late King Charles III.—God keep his soul!—you ought to have known or to have heard of a secret passage leading from the castle cellars on to the wet dock or the military port?"

The old man put his hand to his forehead.

"Yes," said he; "I do remember something of the kind, but," he shook his head, "I am old; at eighty-two memory fails. Am I allowed to consult my sons?"

"What are your sons?" enquired the Queen.

"The eldest, aged fifty, has succeeded me as butler, Your Majesty, the other, aged forty-eight, is locksmith."

"Locksmith! Your Majesty hears that," said Richard. "To open the door one will be needed."

"Very good," the Queen said; "go and consult your sons, but them only, not the women."

"May God be always with Your Majesty," the old man said, bowing as he withdrew.

"Follow that man, Mr. Dick," said the Queen, "and come back as soon as possible to give me the result of the conference."

Dick saluted and followed Pachecho. After a quarter of an hour he returned.

"The passage is found," said he, "and the locksmith is ready to open the door on Your Majesty's order."

"General," the Queen remarked, "in Mr. Richard you have a valuable man, and some day or other I shall probably ask you for him."

"On that day, madame," replied Acton, "his dearest wishes and mine will be fulfilled. What are Your Majesty's commands meanwhile?"

"Come," said the Queen to Emma Hamilton, "there are certain things one must see with one's own eyes."

Time, however, was running on in its remorseless way, and, although harassed on all sides by the bands of Pronio, Gaetano Mammone and Fra Diavolo, the French army, unmoved as time, followed its triple road through the Abruzzi, the Terra di Lavoro, and that part of the Campagna of which the Tyrrhennian sea washes the shore.

All the movements of the Republicans being known at Naples, it had not escaped attention that from the

20th the chief body, that commanded by Championnet in person, had encamped on the evening of the 18th at San Germano, and was advancing upon Capua by Nignano and Calvi.

On the 20th, at eight o'clock in the morning, the Prince of Maliterno and the Duke of Rocca Romana, each at the head of a regiment of volunteers recruited among the noble or wealthy youth of Naples and its neighbourhood, had come to take leave of the Queen, and had set out on their march to meet the Republicans. The nearer the danger approached, the more the King's party and the Queen's party separated into two camps.

The King's party was composed of Cardinal Ruffo, Admiral Caracciolo, the Minister of War, Ariola, and of all those who, clinging to the honour of the Neapolitan name, desired resistance at all price and the defence of Naples pushed to the last extremity.

The Queen's party, composed of Sir William and Lady Hamilton, Nelson, Acton, Castelcicala, Vanni and Guidobaldi, desired the abandonment of Naples, and a prompt flight.

Then, amid all this, the Queen was extremely agitated with the fear of Ferrari's return at any moment. The King, seeing himself insolently deceived, knowing in short whom to blame for all the disasters overwhelming the kingdom, might, as weak natures do, have a moment's energy and escape for ever from the pressure put upon him for twenty years by a minister he had never liked and a spouse he no longer loved.

On the evening of the 20th there was a Council of State: the King announced himself openly and firmly for defence. The Council broke up at midnight. From midnight to one o'clock the Queen stayed in the dark room, and sent for Pasquale di Simone, who received secret instructions from Acton, who was waiting for him there. At half-past one Dick set out for Bénévento, where, two days previously one of the fastest horses in Acton's stables had been sent by a confidential groom. The 21st commenced with one of those tempests which always last for three days at Naples, and which have

given rise to this proverb: "*Nasce, pasce, mori*"—it is born, has its will, and dies.

In spite of the alternatives of rain falling in sheets, and of wind blowing in squalls, the people, who, full of emotion, had a vague feeling of a great catastrophe, were blocking up the streets, squares and cross-roads.

But what pointed to some extraordinary circumstance was that the people were not crowding the old parts of the town; and by the people we mean that multitude of sailors, fishers and lazzaroni who form the population at Naples. On the contrary, one noticed that the most animated groups, while surrounding the royal palace, seemed to be watching Toledo Street and the Strada del Piliero. Finally, three men, already conspicuous in the previous riots, were speaking loudly and agitating heatedly amid these groups. These three men were Pasquale di Simone, the butcher, hideous from his disfigurement, and Fra Pacifico, who, without being in the secret, without knowing what was afoot, giving rein to his violent character, was striking with his laurel stick, now the pavement, now the wall, now poor Jacobino, the scapegoat of the terrible Franciscan's passions.

The whole crowd, without knowing what it was waiting for, seemed to expect something or someone; and the King, who knew no more, but whom the concourse made uneasy, hidden behind the Venetian blind of a window on the ground floor, while mechanically petting Jupiter, was watching it as from time to time, like the rumbling of thunder or the roar of a waterfall, it emitted the double cry of "Long live the King!" and "Death to the Jacobins!"

The Queen, who had ascertained where the King was, kept within the room with Acton, ready to act according to circumstances, whilst Emma in the Queen's apartment with the Countess San Marco was packing up her royal friend's most secret papers and most precious jewels.

Towards eleven o'clock, a young man, exchanging signs with Pasquale di Simone and the butcher, galloped up on an English horse to the great gate in the

palace courtyard, leaped down, threw the bridle to a groom, and as if he had known beforehand where to find the Queen, entered the room where she was waiting with Acton.

"Well?" they asked together.

"He is following me," said he.

"How soon will he be here?"

"In half-an-hour."

"Are those expecting him warned?"

"Yes."

"Well, go to my room and tell Lady Hamilton to inform Nelson."

The young man went up the servants' staircase with a rapidity showing how well-known to him were all the ins and outs of the palace, and transmitted the Queen's wishes to Emma.

"Have you a safe man to take a note to milord Nelson?"

"Myself," replied the young man.

"Then" She wrote at the Queen's desk this single line:

"It will probably be for this evening: hold yourself in readiness.

"EMMA."

The young man went downstairs as promptly as he had come up, crossed the courtyard, took the slope leading to the military port, jumped into a boat, and in spite of wind and rain, had himself taken to the Vanguard, which, with top-gallant masts down, lay at five or six cable's lengths distant, at anchor, surrounded by other English and Portuguese vessels placed under the command of Admiral Nelson. The young man, no other than Richard, was soon with Nelson in his cabin, and gave him the note.

"Her Majesty's orders are about to be carried out," said Nelson, "and that you may give satisfactory news, you shall be the bearer yourself. Henry," said he to his flag captain, "have the boat manned ready to take

monsieur on board the *Alcmène*." Then, putting Emma's note in his breast, he wrote in his turn :

" Strictly Private.

" Three boats and the little cutter from the *Alcmène*, armed with blank weapons only, to be at the *Vittoria* at half-past seven precisely.

" A single boat will signal; the others will remain at a distance with raised oars. The boat to accost will be the *Vanguard's*.

" All the boats will be collected alongside the *Alcmène* before seven o'clock, under command of Commander Hope.

" *Grappling irons in the boats.*

" All the other boats of the *Vanguard* and of the *Alcmène*, armed with knives, and the pinnaces with their grappling irons, will be assembled alongside of the *Vanguard*, under the command of Captain Hardy, who will depart at eight o'clock precisely to take to the sea half-way from *Molosiglio*.

" Each boat should carry from four to six soldiers.

" In case assistance should be necessary, signals to be made with lights.

" HORATIO NELSON."*

" The *Alcmène* to be ready to pay out in the night, if necessary."

While these orders were being received with respect equalling the punctuality with which they were to be executed, a second courier arrived in his turn at the bridge of the *Madeleine*, and taking the route of the first, reached the *Strada del Piliero*.

There he began to find the crowd denser, and in spite of his dress, in which it was easy to recognise a special courier of the King's, he found a difficulty in continuing his way at the same pace. Besides, as if they had done it purposely, people got in the way of his horse, and, displeased at their hurts, began to abuse him. Ferrari,

*The author has before him all these notes in their writer's autograph.—AUTHOR'S NOTE.

for he it was, accustomed to see his livery respected, at first responded with some strokes of his whip sturdily dealt to left and right. The lazzaroni scattered and kept quiet from habit. But, as he reached the corner of the Saint Charles theatre, a man wanted to get in front of the horse, and passed so clumsily that he was knocked down.

"Friends," cried he as he fell, "this is not a King's courier as you might think from his dress. This is a Jacobin in disguise who is escaping! Death to the Jacobin! Death!"

Cries of "The Jacobin! The Jacobin! Death to the Jacobin!" were then heard in the crowd.

Pasquale di Simone flung his knife at the horse; it entered to the hilt. The butcher rushed to the beast's head, and, accustomed to bleed lambs and sheep, opened the artery in the neck. The horse reared, neighed with pain, beat the air with its fore feet, whilst a jet of blood spurted on the bystanders.

The sight of blood has a magical effect on southern peoples. No sooner did the lazzaroni feel themselves watered by the red and warm fluid, no sooner did they scent its acrid odour, than they rushed upon the man and the horse with ferocious cries.

Ferrari felt that if his horse fell he was lost. He kept him up as well as he could with the bridle and with his legs, but the unfortunate animal was mortally wounded. He stumbled to left and right, then crossed his fore legs, rose through a desperate effort on his master's part, and made a bound forward. Ferrari felt the beast giving under him. He was at fifty paces only from the palace guard; he called for help; but the sound of his voice was lost in cries repeated a hundred-fold, "Death to the Jacobin!" He seized a pistol from his holsters, hoping that the report would be better heard than his cries. At that moment his horse fell. The shock made the pistol go off at random, and the bullet hit a boy of from eight to ten years old.

"He assassinates children!" a voice cried.

At that cry, Fra Pacifico, who up till then had been

fairly quiet, rushed among the crowd, which he drove apart with elbows pointed and hard as oaken wedges. He reached the centre of the disturbance just as, fallen with his horse, the unhappy Ferrari was trying to get on his feet. Before he could succeed, the monk's club came down on his head; he fell like an ox struck with a mallet!

But this was not what was wanted; it was under the King's own eyes that Ferrari had to die. The five or six police in the secret of the drama surrounded the body and defended it, whilst the butcher, dragging it by the feet, cried: "Room for the Jacobin!" They left the horse's corpse where it was, after having stripped it, and followed the butcher. Twenty steps further on they were in front of the King's window. Anxious to know the cause of this frightful uproar, the King opened the blind. At the sight of him the cries changed. Hearing these yells, the King really thought that justice was being meted out to some Jacobin. He did not dislike this method of ridding him of his enemies. He saluted the people, a smile on his lips; the people, feeling encouraged, desired to show their King that they were worthy of him. They raised the unhappy Ferrari, bleeding, torn, mutilated, but still alive, in their arms; the corpse had just recovered consciousness: he opened his eyes, recognised the King, and stretched out his arms towards him.

"Rescue! help! - Sire, it is I! I, your Ferrari!"

At this unexpected, terrible, inexplicable sight the King sprang backwards, and going to the back of the room, fell half fainting into a chair—whilst, on the contrary, Jupiter, who, being neither man nor King, had no reason for ingratitude, uttered a howl of distress, and, with bloodshot eyes and foam at the mouth, leaping from the window, sprang to his friend's help.

At that moment the door opened: the Queen came in, seized the King's hand, forced him to rise, dragged him to the window, and showing him this cannibal people dividing up the remains of Ferrari:

"Sire," said she, "you see the men on whom you are

relying for the defence of Naples and for ours; to-day they cut your servants' throats; to-morrow they will cut the throats of your children; the day after to-morrow they will cut our throats. Do you still persist in your wish to remain?"

"Have everything got ready!" cried the King; "this evening I set out"

And, thinking he still saw the slaughter of the unhappy Ferrari, still heard his dying voice appealing for help, he buried his head in his hands, closing his eyes, shutting his ears, and took refuge in the room in his apartments furthest from the street.

When he emerged, two hours later, the first sight he saw was Jupiter lying down all bleeding on a scrap of cloth, which seemed from the remains of fur and bits of braid to have belonged to the unfortunate courier.

The King knelt down by Jupiter, made sure that his favourite had no serious wound, and, wanting to ascertain on what the faithful and courageous animal was lying, he drew from under him, in spite of his howls, a part of Ferrari's jacket which the dog had wrested from his murderers.

By a providential chance, this piece was that in which was the leather pocket made for the despatches; the King unbuttoned it and found intact the imperial contents which the courier was bringing in answer to his letter.

The King restored to Jupiter the scrap of clothing, on which he lay down again, uttering a lugubrious howl; then he went back to his room, shut himself in, unsealed the imperial letter, and read:—

"To my dear brother and beloved cousin, uncle, father-in-law, ally and confederate.

"I never wrote the letter you send me by your courier Ferrari, it is forged from one end to the other.

"The letter which I had the honour of writing was entirely in my own hand, and, instead of urging you to open a campaign, invited you to attempt nothing before the month of April next, the time when I myself count on the arrival of our good and faithful allies the Russians.

“ If the guilty are those whom Your Majesty’s justice can reach, I do not conceal that I should like to see them punished as they deserve.

“ I have the honour to be, with respect, Your Majesty’s very dear brother, beloved cousin, nephew, son-in-law, ally and confederate.

“ FRANCOIS.”

The Queen and Acton had just committed a useless crime. We are mistaken : this crime had its use, since it determined Ferdinand to leave Naples and take refuge in Sicily !

CHAPTER XXI

THE FLIGHT

AT half-past two the Chevalier had returned home as usual, but with agitation foreign to all his habits had twice called: "Luisa! Luisa!"

Luisa darted into the corridor, for, by her husband's voice, she understood that something extraordinary had occurred.

From the library windows, indeed, he had seen what had passed in San Carlo Street, namely, the mutilation of the unhappy Ferrari. As, beneath his gentle exterior, the Chevalier was extremely courageous, with that special courage which endows great hearts with a profound feeling of humanity, his first movement had been to descend and run to the aid of the courier, whom he had recognised as the King's; but, at the library door, he had been stopped by the Prince Royal, who with his coaxing and cold voice had asked: "Where are you going, San Felice?"

"Where am I going? Where am I going?" San Felice had replied. "Your Highness is ignorant of what is happening then?"

"Yes; a man is being killed. But is it such a rare thing for a man to have his throat cut in Naples that you should concern yourself with such a matter?"

"But this man is one of the King's servants."

"I know."

"The Courier Ferrari."

"I recognised him."

"But how is it, why do they kill a poor fellow with

cries of 'Death to the Jacobins!' when, on the contrary, the unfortunate man is one of the King's most devoted servants?"

"How? Why? Have you read Machiavelli's correspondence? Return to your ladder, my dear Chevalier and reflect upon it," said the Duke of Calabria with a wan smile.

The Chevalier did so, and at the third step comprehended that the hand of someone interested in Ferrari's death had directed the blows which had just struck him down.

A quarter of an hour afterwards, the Prince received a summons from his father, and returning in less than an hour said: "San Felice, you remember your promise to accompany me to Sicily? Are you still ready to fulfil it?"

"Certainly, only"

"What?"

"When I informed Madame San Felice of the honour done me by Your Highness, she asked to go with me."

"Thank you for this good news," said the Prince, joyously; "the Princess will be rejoiced to have such a lady of honour. Tell her, my dear Chevalier, how welcome she will be. But I have not told you all. We go to-night."

The Chevalier opened his eyes very wide. "I thought," said he, "that the King had decided not to go till the last extremity."

"Yes; but Ferrari's murder has upset everything. At half-past ten His Majesty embarks with the Queen, the Princesses, my two brothers, the ambassadors and ministers on board Lord Nelson's ship. The Queen has thus decided, and no doubt as compensation to Caracciolo, it is I who embark on his vessel, and consequently you also. I will tell you the time when I know it. Hold yourself in readiness: it will probably be between ten o'clock and midnight."

The Prince then took San Felice's hand. "You know," said he, earnestly, "I am counting on you."

"Your Highness has my word," replied the Chevalier,

bowing; "it is too great an honour for me to have a moment's hesitation." Then, taking his hat, he went out.

No sooner had he told Luisa the reason of his return than she became pale, but all she said was: "At what o'clock do we go?"

"Between ten o'clock and midnight," replied San Felice.

"I shall be ready," said she; "do not be uneasy on my account, my friend." And she withdrew on the pretext of making preparations for the departure, ordering dinner for three o'clock as usual.

But it was to Salvato's room that Luisa went.

Duty had conquered love; but having sacrificed her love, she owed it her tears. So, since the day when she told her husband, "I shall go with you," she had wept much.

She called Giovannina, told her of the projected departure, and instructed her as to the packing, offering to take her with her, or to leave her in charge of the house as she preferred. The girl's extreme joy in declaring for the latter might have opened her eyes if she had any suspicions, but, on the contrary, thinking that it would be less cruel if Salvato were to find someone to talk to of herself than to discover an empty house, she said to the maid: "Perhaps our absence will not last long, but while we are away, say to those who come to see me—remember my words, Nina—say that it was my husband's duty to follow the Prince, and mine to follow my husband; say (for better than anyone you, who do not want to leave Naples, will appreciate what I suffer in leaving it), say that it is bathed in tears that I make my first farewells, and at the hour of departure my last farewells, to each room in this house and to each object in these rooms. And, when you mention tears, you know that these are not empty words, for you have seen them flow." Luisa finished speaking with sobs.

"And . . ." Giovannina hesitated a moment, while a fleeting expression of joy lit up her face. "And if M. Salvato should come, what shall I tell him?"

"That I love him always," replied Luisa, with supreme calm, uncovering her face, "and that this love will last my life long. Go and tell Michael not to go away. I must speak to him before I go, and I am relying on him to take me to the boat."

Nina went out. Left to herself, Luisa sank her face in the pillow on the bed, left a kiss in the print she had made there, and went away in her turn.

Three o'clock had just struck, and with his habitual punctuality that nothing could disturb, the Chevalier entered the dining-room by one door as Luisa came in by another. Michael was on the steps outside.

"Where is Michael?" enquired San Felice. "I hope he has not gone."

"No," said Luisa, and she called him in.

The Chevalier enjoined upon him the strictest secrecy. Michael made the sign of the cross on his mouth. "Speak," said he, "it is as if the butcher had cut out my tongue."

"Well, Michael, everyone is leaving this evening. The King, the Queen, the Royal Family and ourselves."

Tears filled Luisa's eyes not unobserved by Michael.

"And to what land are you going?"

"Sicily."

The lazzaroni shook his head. "I have not the honour of being in His Majesty's counsels," said Michael, "but if I were I should say, 'Sire, you are wrong.'"

"So Admiral Caracciolo and Cardinal Ruffo have advised him," continued the Chevalier; "but the Queen and Acton are afraid, and since to-day's murder the King has decided to leave."

"Ah, ah," said Michael; "I begin to understand why I saw Pasquale di Simone and the butcher among the assassins; but one must not speak of such things at Naples. No matter! The King is wrong. If he remained, the French would never come: we would rather all perish! Ah! if the people knew the King wanted to go!"

"Yes; but the people must not know, Michael. In short, we set out this evening."

"And my little sister also?" asked Michael, in a tone from which he could not banish his surprise.

"Yes; this beloved child wishes to follow me," said the Chevalier, stretching out his hand to grasp Luisa's.

"Well," said Michael, "you may boast of having wedded a saint; I wish I could go with you."

"Come, Michael, come," cried Luisa, who saw in him a friend to whom she could speak of Salvato.

"Alas, it is impossible, little sister: each to his duty. I am a captain of the people; I have to fight, to defend Naples; to kill as many French as I can, but be easy, little sister," he went on laughing, "I shall not kill them all."

"Well, to conclude," went on the Chevalier, "we embark this evening at the Vittoria, to join Admiral Caracciolo's frigate, behind the Castle de l'Ovo. I wanted to beg you not to leave your sister, and, if need be, to do for her, at the moment of embarkation, what you did two hours ago for me, that is, to protect her."

"Oh, as to that, you can be easy, Chevalier. I would die for you, but for her I would let myself be chopped in pieces. All the same, if the people knew this there would be a rare riot."

"So," said the Chevalier, getting up from the table, "I have your promise, Michael: you will not leave Luisa till she is in the boat."

"No more than her shadow," replied the young man.

The Chevalier, who had his papers to arrange, his books to pack, his manuscripts to remove, withdrew to his study.

Michael, studying Luisa, saw two large tears silently welling from her beautiful eyes. "Some men have luck," said he; "the Chevalier is one of them."

Luisa rose, but quickly as she went out and shut the door behind her, Michael could hear her bursting sobs. She went on tiptoe, as usual to Salvato's room; and sighed as she heard Giovannina singing a gay Neapolitan air.

"How glad the poor girl is to stay in Naples!" she thought; "if I were free to do so, perhaps I should sing also," and she went into the room with a heart further oppressed by the contrast. Alone there she fell once more into one of those long reveries filled with the image of Salvato and the hours they had passed together, and remained thus with closed eyes till Michael gently knocked at the door. He brought a letter. Was it possible that she was to have the supreme consolation at such a moment of a last letter from Salvato?

"From Portici; I took it from the postman," said Michael. "Shall I stay or go?"

"Stay," cried Luisa. "I have no secrets from you." But for some moments her eyes swam in a mist of tears, and she could read nothing. At last she was able to make out:

"San-Germano, 19th December, in the morning.

"Dear Luisa,

"Here I am, then, twenty leagues from you, my lovely fairy of the palm-tree, and when you get this letter, I shall be still nearer. The brigands harrass us, assassinate us, mutilate us, but do not stop us. This is because we are not an army, not men marching to invade a kingdom and conquer a capital: we are an idea travelling round the world.

"There I am, talking politics!

"I wager that I guess where you are reading my letter. You are reading it in our room, sitting at the head of my bed, in that room where we shall see one another again, and where I shall forget, in doing so, the long days passed far from you. . . ."

Luisa broke off; tears blinded her eyes, sobs choked her voice.

Michael ran to her and knelt down.

"Come, little sister," said he. "Courage! What you are doing is splendid, and God will reward you. And who knows! You are both young; perhaps one day you will see one another again."

Luisa shook her head.

"No, no," said she, "we shall never meet again. And it will be best; I love him too much, Michael; and it is only since I resolved to see him no more that I know how much I love him."

Just then San Felice's voice was heard calling her. She went to him, and in the drawing-room found Dr. Cirillo.

Luisa flushed. Dr. Cirillo was also in her secret. Besides, she did not forget that it was from the liberal committee, of which he was one, that the letters of Salvato reached her.

The doctor greeted the young woman, and at the first glance perceived the agitation of her moral disturbance.

"She is better, but not cured," said he. "I am very glad I came to-day," and he laid stress on *to-day*. Luisa looked down.

"Well, I must leave her alone with you," said San Felice; "fortunately, I am very busy, or I should be listening at the door."

"Then pray go, Chevalier," said Cirillo, laughing, and he pushed San Felice towards the door, and shut it after him.

Then, coming back to Luisa, and taking her hands, "You have been weeping, my dear child," said he. "Since you had a letter from him, or before?"

"Both."

"Any accident to him?"

"No, thank God."

"Then what is it?"

Luisa's eyes filled with tears.

"You have nothing to say in complaint of San Felice, I presume?"

"Oh!" cried Luisa, clasping her hands, "he is an angel of fatherly goodness."

"I understand—he goes and you stay."

"He goes, and I follow him."

Cirillo's eyes grew moist. "You are an angel, I think."

"No; angels do not weep at doing their duty."

"And I will perform mine in telling him how much you love him, how much you have suffered."

Cirillo wanted to kiss her hands; but Luisa threw her arms round his neck.

"Oh! you will tell him! You will tell him! won't you," murmured she low in his ear.

Cirillo pressed her hand in promise.

San Felice, entering, found Luisa in his friend's arms.

"Well," said he laughing, "you give your patients consultations by embracing them, doctor?"

"No; but in embracing them I take leave of those I love, of those I esteem, of those I revere. Ah, Chevalier, you are a happy man!"

"He deserves to be," said Luisa, holding out her hand to her husband.

"That is not always a reason," said Cirillo. "And now, au revoir, Chevalier! Go! and serve your Prince. I stay and am going to try to serve my country."

Then, joining the husband's and wife's hands in his: "I should like to be Saint Januario, not to perform a miracle twice yearly, but to bless you as you deserve. Adieu!" And he bounded out of the house.

San Felice followed him on to the steps to wave adieu; then coming back to his wife: "At ten o'clock the Prince's carriage is coming to fetch us," said he.

"I shall be ready," said Luisa, and she kept her word.

She took her husband's arm, and entered the Prince's carriage with him. Michael got up on the box. Nina, her lips trembling with joy, kissed her mistress's hands. Then the door shut and the carriage set off.

The weather was frightful. Wind, hail and rain were beating against the carriage windows, and the bay, which, in spite of the darkness, was seen in all its extent, was but a mass of foam, tumultuous with waves. San Felice threw an alarmed glance on this furious sea, which Luisa, buffeted by a storm of a different kind of violence, scarcely noticed. The idea of the danger to which he was about to expose the only being he loved in the world, terrified him. He turned to look at her. She was pale and motionless in her corner. Her eyes

were closed, and thinking she was unobserved in the darkness, she let her tears flow. Then, for the first time, it occurred to the Chevalier that his wife was making some great sacrifice of which he was in ignorance. He took her hand and put it to his lips. Luisa opened her eyes, and, smiling at her husband through her tears:

“How good you are, my friend,” said she.

The Chevalier put his arm round her neck. Luisa could not restrain a groan. The Chevalier seemed as if he did not hear.

They reached the landing-place. A boat, manned with six rowers, was waiting, keeping its place with great difficulty against the waves which were driving it on to the shore.

Scarcely did the men see the carriage stop than they cried: “Make haste! there is a heavy sea; we can scarcely manage the boat.”

And, indeed, San Felice had only to look at it to see the jeopardy of those in it.

The Chevalier said something in a low tone to the coachman, and something else to Michael as low, took Luisa by the arm and went down with her on to the shore. Before they reached the sea line, a wave, breaking on the sand, covered them with foam.

Luisa uttered a cry.

The Chevalier took her in his arms, and pressed her to his heart. Then, making a sign to Michael: “Wait,” said he to Luisa; “I am going to get into the boat, and when I am in it, Michael and I will help you in too.”

Luisa was in that state of mind which precedes utter exhaustion, and which hardly leaves power of expression to the will. She passed then, almost without remarking it, from the Chevalier’s arms to her brother’s.

The Chevalier resolutely approached the boat, and just as, with the help of a boat-hook, two men kept it close up to the shore, he sprang in crying:

“Shove off!”

“And the little lady?” enquired the coxswain.

“She remains,” said San Felice.

“Indeed, it is no weather to take women on board

in," replied the coxswain. "Row, boys! Row together, and smartly!"

In a moment the boat was ten fathoms from the shore.

All this had happened so quickly that Luisa had not had time to guess her husband's intention, or consequently to dispute it.

On seeing the boat put off, she cried out: "And I! And I!" said she, trying to escape from Michael's arms to follow her husband, "And I; are you leaving me behind then?"

"What would your father, to whom I promised to watch over you, say if he saw me expose you to such danger?" replied San Felice, raising his voice.

"But I cannot stay in Naples!" cried Luisa, trying to free her arms. "I want to go, I want to follow you, to be with you always! Help, Luciano! If I stay I am lost."

The Chevalier was already distant; a gust of wind brought these words:

"Michael, I trust her to you!"

"No, no," cried Luisa, despairingly. "Come back, Luciano! You do not know. I love Salvato!"

At the same moment, the boat which was bearing away the Chevalier on the first part of his voyage to Sicily disappeared behind the gloomy and massive structure of the Castle de l'Ovo. It was Destiny.

We must return to the King and the Queen, whose flight, as we know, was resolved and fixed for the same evening. The heir apparent, his wife and daughter, Sir William and Lady Hamilton, Acton, and the most intimate of the palace circle, it was arranged should accompany them to Sicily on the Vanguard.

The King, as we have seen, had promised Caracciolo that if he left Naples it would only be upon his ship; but having fallen again under the Queen's yoke in his terror, his Majesty forgot his promise for two reasons. The first, his own, was on account of the shame he would feel

when with the admiral for leaving Naples after having promised to remain. The second, the Queen's, was that Caracciolo, sharing the patriotic principles of all the Neapolitan nobility, might, instead of taking the King to Sicily, give him up to the Jacobins, who, masters of such a hostage, would then force him to set up the government of their choice, or worse still, would bring him to trial as the English had brought Charles I., and the French Louis XVI.

As a consolation and compensation for the honour of which he was deprived, it was decided that the admiral should have that of convoying the Duke of Calabria, his family and household.

The aged Princesses of France were informed of the decision taken, and invited with the help of their body-guard of seven to provide for their safety as they deemed best, and fifteen thousand ducats were sent to assist them in their flight. This duty performed, no further thought was spent on them.

All day long jewels, money, precious furniture, works of art, and the statues that they wished to remove to Sicily were brought down and piled up in the secret passage. The King would have liked to take his kangaroos, but it was impossible. He remained shut up in his apartments, brooding over the treason of Acton, of which the Emperor's letter gave proof, and refused to receive anyone whatever. The order was strictly enforced as well with regard to Francis Caracciolo, who, having seen from his ship the comings and goings and signals on board the English warships, had his suspicions; as to the Marquis Vanni, who, having found the Queen's door closed, and knowing from the Prince of Castelcicala that there was a question of departure, came despairingly to knock at that of the King.

Ferdinand for a moment thought of sending for Cardinal Ruffo, and of taking him for his companion and counsellor during the voyage, but he and Nelson were not on terms. Besides, the Cardinal was hated by the Queen, and, as usual, Ferdinand preferred his ease to the niceties of friendship and gratitude. And he told

himself that, being so clever, the Cardinal would manage perfectly alone.

The embarkation was fixed for ten in the evening. So it was agreed that at ten all those who with their Majesties were to be embarked on the Vanguard, should assemble in the Queen's apartment.

As ten o'clock struck, the King entered holding his dog in leash; this was the sole friend on whose fidelity he relied, and consequently the only one he took with him. He had thought of Ascoli and Malaspina, but he had thought also that, like the Cardinal, they would manage for themselves. He looked round the immense dimly-lighted drawing-room—it was feared that too much light might lead to suspicions of departure—and he saw all the fugitives assembled or rather dispersed in different groups. The principal one was composed of the Queen, her much-loved son Prince Leopold, the young Prince Albert, the four Princesses and Emma Hamilton. Acton, Sir William and Castalcicala were standing talking at a window, listening to the wind whistling and the rain beating against the glass. A group of ladies-in-waiting was gathered at a table. Apart from all, scarce visible in the shadow, was the outline of Dick.

As the King entered all rose, but at a sign from him kept their places.

“Do not disturb yourselves,” said he, “do not disturb yourselves, that is no longer worth the trouble.” And he sat down in an easy chair near the door, taking Jupiter's head between his knees.

At his father's voice the young Prince Albert ran to the King, who, parting his fair hair, kissed him on the forehead, and having held him to his breast for a moment, sent him back to Emma, whom the child called his *little mother*.

There followed a mournful silence in this shadowy apartment; those who were talking spoke low.

At half-past ten the Count of Thurn, a German in the Neapolitan service, should have entered the palace by the postern. He had been given a key to the

Queen's apartments, which by a single, almost massive, door communicated with that exit leading to the military port.

The clock, amid silence, struck the half-hour. Almost directly a knock was heard at the door of communication. Why did the Count knock instead of opening the door with his key?

In supremely important moments like this, everything that in other circumstances would merely cause uneasiness, causes terror.

The Queen started and rose. The King merely gazed; he knew nothing of the arrangements made.

"It can only be the Count," said Acton, ever calm and logical. "If Your Majesty permits I will go and see."

"Go," said the Queen.

Acton lit a taper and entered the corridor. The Queen anxiously looked after him. The silence, already lugubrious, became deadly. At the end of a few minutes Acton re-appeared.

"Well?" asked the Queen.

"The door has probably not been opened for a long time; the key has broken in the lock. The Count knocked to ascertain if there is any way of opening the door on the inside. I tried, but there is none."

"What is to be done then?"

"Break it open."

"Did you give the order?"

"Yes, madame, and it is being done."

One heard, in fact, violent blows being struck on the door, then cracking, as it broke down. There was something ominous in all these sounds.

Steps approached, the drawing-room door opened, and the Count of Thurn appeared, apologising for the accident and delay.

"It is an omen," said the Queen.

"In any case, if it is an omen," said the King with his natural good sense, "it is one signifying that we should do better to stay than to go."

The Queen was afraid of a return of determination in her august spouse. "Let us start," said she.

"Everything is ready, madame," said the Count of Thurn, "but I ask permission to communicate to the King an order I received this evening from Admiral Nelson."

The King rose and approached the candelabra, near which the Count was waiting with a paper in his hand.

"Read, sire," said he.

"The order is in English; and I do not know English," said the King.

"I will translate it to Your Majesty."

"To Admiral Count of Thurn.

"Gulf of Naples, 21st December.

"Get the Neapolitan frigates and sloops ready to be burned."

"What do you say?" said the King.

The Count repeated the order.

"And why burn frigates and sloops which have cost so dear and which have taken ten years to build?"

"To prevent their falling into the hands of the French, sire."

"But why not take them to Sicily?"

"Such is Milord Nelson's order, sire, and the reason why before transmitting it to the Marquis of Nizza, who is to carry it out, I wished to submit it to Your Majesty."

"Sire, sire," said the Queen, approaching the King, "we are losing precious time, and for a mere nothing."

"*Peste*, madame!" cried the King, "you call that nothing. Consult the naval budget for the last ten years, and you will see it amounts to more than a hundred and sixty millions."

"Sire, eleven o'clock is striking," said the Queen, "and Milord Nelson is expecting us."

"You are right," the King said, "and Milord Nelson is not made to wait even for a King, even for a Queen. You will follow Milord Nelson's orders, Count; you will burn my fleet. What England dares not seize, she

burns. Ah! my poor Caracciolo, how right you were, and how wrong I was not to take your advice! Come gentlemen, come ladies, let us not keep Milord Nelson waiting." And the King, taking the taper from Acton's hands, went first; everyone followed him, as he stepped in silence, with straining ear, with palpitating heart! Having reached the middle of the staircase before a window, he thought he heard a noise without. He stopped, and hearing it once more, he blew out his candle, and everyone was in the dark. Then one had to descend groping and step by step the narrow, difficult stairs, which, without a balustrade, were steep and dangerous. However, the last step was reached without accident, and there came a puff of fresh, damp open air. The landing stage was only a few steps off.

In the military port the imprisoned sea was fairly calm; but the violence of the wind made itself felt, and the sound of the waves furiously breaking on the shore was heard.

On reaching the sort of quay which runs along the castle walls, the Count of Thurn threw a rapid and questioning glance at the sky. It was full of heavy, low, hurrying clouds; and in the short space between them and the water came and went gusts of that terrible south-west wind which causes those wrecks and disasters of which the Gulf of Naples so often sees on its bad days.

The King noticed the Count's uneasy glance. "If the weather is too bad you could not take us on board to-night," he said.

"It is milord's order," replied the Count; "however, if Your Majesty absolutely declines . . ."

"The order! the order!" the King repeated, impatiently, "but it is risking our lives! Come, do you answer for us, Count?"

"I shall do all in a man's power, struggling against wind and sea, to conduct you on board the Vanguard."

"Faith! that is not an answer. Would you embark yourself on such a night—if you were in my place?"

"In Your Majesty's place, commanded only by circumstances and by God, I should think twice about it."

"Well," asked the impatient Queen, not daring, however, so mighty is the law of etiquette, to get into the boat before her husband, "well, what are we waiting for?"

"What are we waiting for?" cried the King. "Don't you hear what the Count says? It is bad weather; he does not answer for us, and there is no one, not excepting Jupiter straining at his leash, but would advise me to return to the palace."

"Return then, sir, and allow us all to be torn in pieces as you have seen one of your most faithful servants to-day. As for me, I prefer the sea and storms to Naples and its population."

"I beg you to believe that I regret my faithful servant more than anyone, especially now that I know what to think of his death. But, as to Naples and its population, it is not I who would have anything to fear."

"Yes, I am aware of that. As it sees in you its representative, it adores you. But I, who have not the honour of enjoying its sympathies, I am going."

And despite the respect for etiquette, the Queen entered the boat first. The young Princesses and Prince Leopold, accustomed to obey the Queen rather than the King, followed her, as cygnets follow their mother. Little Prince Albert, only, let go the hand of Emma, ran to the King, and seizing his arm and pulling him towards the boat, said, "Come with us, papa."

The King had no power of resistance, unless supported. He glanced round to see if he could find support from anyone; but at his look, which, however, had more of entreaty than of command in it, every eye was lowered. The Queen had allies—some of whom fear dominated, while others were wrapped in selfish considerations; the King had none at all. He felt completely alone, deserted; he bent his head, and letting the little Prince lead him, pulling his dog along the while, the only living thing which shared his reluctance to quit the shore of Naples, he stepped into the boat in his turn. Then, taking his seat, he said: "I am here, since you all wish it."

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The lieutenant without losing a moment cried "Cast off." Two sailors on the quay pushed the boat off; the oars dipped and the illustrious fugitives headed towards the open, roaring sea. A few moments, and they were lost in the immensity of the night.

THE END

